

HardisonInk.com

County waits to accept delinquent tax ad offer

By Jeff M. Hardison © March 9, 2017 at 6:37 p.m.

BRONSON -- On a motion by Levy County Commissioner Lilly Rooks, seconded by Commissioner Mike Joyner, the County Commission chose Tuesday (March 7) to wait before accepting a revised offer from *HardisonInk.com* to help increase sales of delinquent tax notices.



The ad would look like the example shown to the left here. (This is not an active ad.)

Attorney Sunshine Baynard, of Baynard Law P.A. of Chiefland, spoke on behalf of *HardisonInk.com* sole proprietor Jeff M. Hardison.

The County Commission agreed that only the *Chiefland Citizen* is qualified as a bidder, because it is a paper publication with paid subscribers throughout Levy County. In its bid, the *Chiefland Citizen* acknowledged that the other two newspapers owned by Landmark in Levy County are not available throughout the whole county. The other two are the *Williston Pioneer* and *Cedar Key Beacon*.

Baynard had the County Commission acknowledge that the *Chiefland Citizen* is the only qualified bidder.

Then she reminded them that Hardison had offered to provide an entire added web page to his website, which currently includes seven pages -- the Home Page, Police, Calendar, Business, Community, Life and Leisure pages. That offer to add an eighth page was for a yearlong webpage for \$5,000 to show the whole list of delinquent tax notices.

Hardison scaled back his offer that was presented by his attorney to the County Commission on Tuesday.

The new offer on Tuesday was to run an ad where a person could click on it and it would open in a separate window to show the website of Levy County Tax Collector Linda Fugate, where she publishes that delinquent tax information.

The new price for the different offer is \$150, and it would only run from May 11 through May 31 -- the three weeks when the material is published in the weekly *Chiefland* paper.

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Baynard reminded the County Commission that Hardison's offer is in addition to the mandatory minimum required paper publishing of delinquent tax certificates for sale.

The offer is to attract more people to purchase Levy County delinquent tax certificates.

“I do not understand how this would infringe on any exclusive print rights,” Baynard said.

County Attorney Anne Brown said the placement of delinquent tax notices for Levy County is exclusive to the *Chiefland Citizen*.

Linda Cooper, the former office manager of the *Levy County Journal* asked why the exclusivity clause was added by attorney Brown.

Brown said she put it in because that is what was done in previous years, back when there were more than just Landmark newspapers that were qualified to bid on these ads.

Brown said she needed time to review the new offer from *HardisonInk.com* to make sure there were no grounds for Landmark and the *Chiefland Citizen* to sue Levy County.

Hardison told the County Commission that he felt attorney Baynard had clearly explained the revised offer. It is not for publication or republication of any form. It is an ad that provides a link to the Tax Collector's Office.

He told the County Commission this is a good deal. It is a clear offer that he would vote in favor of, if it was presented to him.

“This really is the best method,” Hardison said on Thursday evening (March 9). “I had spoken with Tax Collector Fugate and this is the most efficient method to increase the market for Levy County.”

Hardison said he thinks attorney Baynard is an excellent attorney and he is glad she represented him in the third round with the Levy County Commission.

“I'll show up on March 21, or I'll send my senior reporter Terry Witt to cover that meeting,” Hardison said. “And the County Commission can accept or reject the offer.”