

HardisonInk.com

Tim West votes 'No' on tree permit fee



Chiefland City Commissioner Tim West and City Commissioner Rollin Hudson listen to a person at the Monday night (Sept. 10) meeting.

~

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © Sept. 12, 2018 at 12:28 p.m.

CHIEFLAND – Among his first actions as a member of the Chiefland City Commission on Monday night (Sept. 10) was for Tim West to vote “No” on a \$50 permit fee.



(from left) Mayor Betty Walker, City Commissioner Donald Lawrence and Vice Mayor Chris Jones conduct city business at the Monday night (Sept. 10) meeting.

City Manager Mary Ellzey had brought before the City Commission the current ordinance in regard to cutting down and replacing trees as development occurs in Chiefland.

After a discussion, the City Commission voted 4-1, with West dissenting, to require a \$50 permit fee to cut down one tree or any number of trees in one development action.

For instance, this \$50 fee would cover a developer clear-cutting several acres of trees

HardisonInk.com

in one fell swoop. The single motion Monday night was in regard to the \$50 permit fee. As it exists, a person who fails to obtain the permit before developing their commercial property and cutting one or more trees may be fined twice the permit fee – or \$100 for not obtaining the fee prior to tree removal.

City Commissioner West said he voted “No” because he does not favor the city imposing any fee on a developer for tree removal. West said he wants to do what he can to encourage entrepreneurs to come to Chiefland and build here.

The current ordinance appears to require a developer to replace tree-for-tree every tree that is cut down.

City Commissioner Hudson said that whether this is a residential property owner, to which this ordinance does not apply, or whether it is a commercial property developer, the owner of the property is the owner of the trees. Therefore, Hudson said, the property owner should be allowed to do whatever he or she desires with their property with no impact imposed upon them by the municipal government.

Hudson mentioned that to replace a 20-inch diameter oak tree, for instance, would be very expensive, and that perhaps the ordinance can require the developer to plant a seedling for each tree removed.

Chiefland City Commissioners plan to discuss the current city tree ordinance more at the next City Commission meeting, and to potentially instruct City Attorney Norm D. Fugate to amend the ordinance for possible approval of the amended ordinance relatively soon thereafter.