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BEHIND THE SCENES

Emotional day as Sheehy says goodbye

NANCY FOSTER
Hastings Tribune

He punched away at the keys on his keyboard. Facing the window that overlooks Third Street, Rick Sheehy put the finishing touches on his resignation letter early Monday morning.

"This is a tough one," he said of writing the letter, which symbolized his decision to take the state's position as lieutenant governor.

Sheehy, a 45-year-old Hastings native, had just begun his second term as mayor.

Typically, as mayor, Sheehy wouldn't arrive at City Hall until around 3 p.m., spending his mornings and early afternoons as a paramedic and market general manager at Rural/Metro Medical Services.

But Monday morning was different. He was there before 8 a.m.

City Hall was buzzing with unusual activity as Sheehy prepared his resignation letter and staff worked to make arrangements for the arrival of Gov. Dave Heineman.

"I'm just ready for it to be

Inside

Democratic party chairman comments on pick. — Page B1



BRENT McCOWN/Tribune

Mayor Rick Sheehy hands his letter of resignation to Hastings City Clerk Connie Hartman Monday morning before being named lieutenant governor.

done, so everyone can know, and I can get to work," said Sheehy, who's had to remain quiet about the job.

As he continued to punch

away at his letter, he felt nervous as he started the day, he said.

"This is a big change in my life and in my family's life. I'm

leaving 10 years of municipal government and leaving Rural/Metro ambulance," said Sheehy, who served as a council member for seven years

before becoming mayor.

"I'm taking a big step out."

OBTAINING THE POST Sheehy was publicly named

a possibility for lieutenant governor last week, but the first phone call he received about the position was several weeks ago. Heineman called him at home on a lazy Sunday afternoon and asked whether he would consider the position.

The mayor quickly said yes. The pair only knew each other from working on some political issues, but Sheehy said he knew they shared some of the same thoughts and goals regarding the state's future.

After the initial phone call, Sheehy said they had several brief conversations. And on Sunday, Heineman made an official offer.

Without even knowing the position's benefits, Sheehy accepted. He only knew the position's salary — \$60,000 — which he learned by looking online.

As lieutenant governor, he will act as the state's director of Homeland Security, chairman of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission and presiding officer of the Nebraska Legislature. He'll also be involved in economic development efforts, although his role has yet to be defined.

"It's a lot of different hats to wear all of a sudden, but I'm used to that," Sheehy said.

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RICK HOUCIN/Tribune

Hastings Mayor Matt Rossen is sworn in by Adams County Clerk Magistrate Tom Hawes at Monday night's City Council meeting.

Rossen sworn in as mayor

LINDA GARCIA
Hastings Tribune

A whirlwind day for Hastings leadership concluded at the Hastings City Council meeting Monday night.

New Mayor Matt Rossen was sworn in at the start of the meeting, filling the shoes of former mayor, now lieutenant governor, Rick Sheehy.

The council first had to vote to accept Sheehy's resignation from the mayoral position. Then Clerk Magistrate Tom Hawes administered the oath to Rossen.

The whirlwind began earlier Monday when Sheehy was sworn in as lieutenant governor in the same place. He reportedly accepted Gov. Dave

Heineman's offer Sunday night.

Heineman became governor last week after former Gov. Mike Johanns was tapped to become U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, a Cabinet-level position.

Rossen, 38, of 1419 Pershing Road, choked up a little as he thanked his family for their support. His wife, Shelli, and two sons, Derek, 16, and Jake, 10, sat in the front row, just ahead of his special guests Vern and Marcia Hasty of Holdrege. Vern Hasty served as a "major father figure and mentor I had my entire life," Rossen said. Rossen's adopted father died when he was 5, he said, and Vern Hasty instilled a strong work ethic.

Rossen said it was both a great day

for Hastings and a sad day.

"I'm sorry to see Mr. Sheehy go. He has been a role model for me, a leader to the community," he said. "It's also exciting to have a member of our community move into second position for the state of Nebraska. It's an honor not only for the achievements Mr. Sheehy has done and what our city staff has done."

Rossen said he'd talked to his sons about taking the job, and they were initially excited because they thought they'd get rich. When he told being mayor wouldn't make them rich, they asked, "Why would you want to do this?"

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Anderson proposes two new track sites

LINDA GARCIA
Hastings Tribune

Two new properties have potential to become Motorsport Park Hastings if George Anderson can work out the details.

Anderson told the Hastings Planning Commission Monday afternoon about his intent to look at two properties as sites for his proposed high-performance track, which would feature a variety of activities.

But the planning commission is unable to issue recommendations until he applies for the necessary permits.

Anderson said he spent six months working on a plan to develop the track and its related facilities at the Hastings Municipal Airport, but the inter-

est the track has drawn from sanctioning bodies like the National Hot Rod Association means he needs more space than the airport can provide.

So he found a couple of options.

From his reading of city code, a racetrack would be allowed as a conditional use in land zoned for agriculture uses.

Land at the intersection of Showboat Road and U.S. Highway 6 would meet that requirement, he said.

The people attending events would be able to use the bypass road from North U.S. Highway 281, which unfortunately would take them around Hastings.

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"On my side of the ticket, I'd like to bring this track here, and the thousands of people it would bring, and the thousands of dollars to the community, and the couple hundred jobs it would bring."

- George Anderson



Widow of area rancher files suit over death

KEVIN O'HANLON
The Associated Press

The widow of a Clay County rancher and rodeo rider who was killed by an accidental injection of a cattle antibiotic has filed a lawsuit alleging the drug's manufacturer failed to warn about its dangers.

Rourk Erickson, 38, was killed in 2003 when a cow charged and the needle holding the antibiotic punctured his skin, according to a lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in North Platte by Erickson's widow, Debra.

The drug, Micotil 300, is used to treat respiratory infections in cattle. In animals, Micotil is to be injected only under the skin, and it can be deadly if overdosed or injected into the bloodstream.

It also can be fatal to humans.

More than a dozen deaths related to the drug have been reported since it was approved for use in 1990 in other countries and in the United States in 1992.

Eli Lilly and Co. distributes Micotil through its Elanco Animal Health division in Greenfield, Ind.

"Eli Lilly distributed with supplies of Micotil information concerning use of the drug," according to the lawsuit filed by William Lamson Jr. and William Settles of Omaha. "However, Eli



Erickson

Lilly supplied Micotil 300 in a bulk solution form without any delivery system designed to prevent or reduce the potential for accidental injection into the person administering the drug to cattle in a typical place in which cattle are kept.

"Without a safe delivery system supplied with the drug, a cattle producer such as Mr. Erickson could use the drug only by employing a delivery device, such as a syringe and needle that presented a significant hazard of accidental injection," the lawsuit says.

Rourk Erickson died on March 8, 2003, after putting Micotil into a syringe equipped with a hypodermic needle to treat one of his cattle.

Please see MICOTIL/page B2

Weather

Lo: 20s
Hi: 30s
Partly cloudy tonight. Mostly cloudy, cooler Wednesday



Art by Kaz Starr-Chavira, 7, Lincoln Elementary

911 HOAX

OMAHA — A man accused of calling 911 and reporting he was lost and pinned inside a crashed truck was arrested on suspicion of false reporting.

More than a dozen law enforcement agencies from six Nebraska

counties, including a dog unit, a police helicopter and a medical helicopter, responded to the 2:41 a.m. Monday telephone call. They fanned out in search of a truck the man said he was a passenger in when it flipped into an embankment while he was asleep on a trip between

Norfolk and Omaha. The driver was unconscious, the man said.

Douglas County emergency operators figured out the suspect's name, however, and he was found more than two hours later, safe in his apartment.

The Associated Press

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Sheehy: An emotional goodbye to staff



Rick Sheehy pauses in thought as he composes his letter of resignation Monday morning.

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He said he also hopes to play a part in behavioral health reform, which has been a hot issue locally.

Sheehy said he's excited about the position but that there's a lot to learn in a short amount of time. The Nebraska Legislature just started its 2005 session.

The scariest part about the new job is that it could last only two years, he said, because the next gubernatorial election is in 2006, with the term beginning in 2007.

But, he had to seize the opportunity, he said. Fortunately, he said he can continue living in Hastings. He will spend a fair portion of his time traveling the state, he said, but expects to be home most every night.

Looking back at his time as mayor, he said he's proud of what his staff accomplished, including building the new Aquacourt Water Park, the Hastings Skate Park and Pioneer Spirit Trails.

There also were the controversial annexations of Lochland and Westbrook subdivisions.

"Annexation was tough, but I'm not sure I would change anything," Sheehy said.

As he reflected on his years as mayor, he looked forward simultaneously.

"There are some things I wish I would have gotten done, but you can't look back on those," he said.

Sheehy looked fondly around his office. Stacks of paper were piled on his desk behind him, part of his personalized filing system. Trinkets from students and various groups were perched on shelves and on his desk. Plaques and certificates honoring his serv-

ice dotted the walls.

"One of these days, I'm gonna have to move all of this stuff out of here," Sheehy said, his nameplate with the title "Mayor" still on his desk.

"That's going to be hard."

EMOTIONAL GOODBYE

At 9:04 a.m., Sheehy met with about a dozen staff members.

Sitting at the head of a table in a conference room, an emotional Sheehy said his farewell.

"It's been a wonderful four years," he said. "We've gotten a lot accomplished, and I hope everyone holds their heads high."

He told his staff members he appreciated their hard work. A tearful city treasurer, Barb Adler, left the room during the goodbye, as tears welled up in Sheehy's eyes, as well.

"I know I can speak for all of us. No one has worked harder," City Administrator Joe Patterson said to Sheehy. "And I've been under six mayors. Anything that comes to you, you deserve."

City officials joked with Sheehy, lightening the mood. He returned the favor.

"Now I can call and complain," Sheehy said lightheartedly.

Police Chief Larry Thoren told him his move would be great for Nebraska, and Fire Chief Kent Gilbert said he was glad Sheehy could remain living in Hastings.

"You've been a great asset to the community, and it would be a shame to lose you," Gilbert said.

At 9:45 a.m., Sheehy turned in his final resignation letter.

Shortly after, the governor arrived. Together by phone, they made their first announcement to media in western Nebraska at 10

a.m. As they made their call, Sheehy's family and supporters gathered to hear his official 10:30 a.m. announcement.

After much anticipation, Sheehy, along with his family, walked into the City Council Chambers and formally accepted the job of lieutenant governor. Sheehy was sworn in, and Heineman touted him as a leader and public servant.

Sheehy was then shuffled into another room, where he was bombarded by reporters and supporters. "Congratulations," "good luck" and "you'll make us proud" were heard above the buzzing crowd.

His two children, Maggie, 19, a freshman at Doane College in Crete, and Joel, 15, a sophomore at St. Cecilia High School, stood by as they watched their father make his way through the sea of people.

"I'm just really excited for him, because I know how hard he's worked over the years," Maggie said.

Sheehy's wife of 21 years, Connie, agreed.

"I'm just so proud of him, not only for how he's dealt with things in the past but for being willing to take on this new challenge," she said. "It's a wonderful thing, and I know he's really excited about working for the people of Nebraska. The hardest thing for him will be not taking care of the city of Hastings. It's been emotional."

And as Sheehy was shuffled out the door to head for Omaha, where he would make more press announcements, he smiled.

"The world has been lifted off my shoulders," Sheehy said. "It's time to go to work."

Hastings political claims to fame

SHAY GRAVES Hastings Tribune

Former Hastings Mayor Rick Sheehy is not the first Hastings resident to rise to high state or national office.

With Monday's swearing-in of Sheehy as the new lieutenant governor, the Hastings native joins the ranks of a handful of other Hastings residents who went on to political greatness.

Here are a few of those:

CHARLES H. DIETRICH

The first and only governor to come from Hastings did so more than a century ago.

Charles H. Dietrich served as governor for only four months before becoming a U.S. senator. Dietrich was chosen by the Legislature to break the deadlock of two candidates for U.S. Senate.

Dietrich was chosen to fill the seat of M.L. Hayward, who had died soon after his election two years earlier. Dietrich served in the Senate until March 1905.

After suffering from two paralytic strokes, Dietrich died April 10, 1924, after falling on the front step of his home.

FRED A. SEATON

Perhaps one of the most prominent political figures from Hastings was Fred Seaton, who served in a presidential cabinet.

Seaton served two terms in the state Legislature, from 1945-49. In 1951, he was appointed to the U.S. Senate to fill a vacancy due to the death of Republican Floor Leader Kenneth Wherry.

In 1953, Seaton began his close work with President Dwight D. Eisenhower

as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for legislative and public affairs.

Two years later, he became an assistant to the president with the charge of serving as a liaison between the president and the executive departments and agencies.

Seaton served as Secretary of the Interior during Eisenhower's last six years in office.

As secretary, Seaton was instrumental in bringing Alaska and Hawaii to statehood.

He died Jan. 16, 1974.

RICHARD D. MARVEL

A state senator who served one of the longest terms in history was born and raised in Hastings.

Richard D. Marvel served as a senator for the 33rd District in the Nebraska Legislature for 28 years.

He served from 1950-54, then took a break before his 24-year run from 1958-82.

Even though he was very active in education outside of the Legislature, Marvel served many leading roles in the political scene, as well.

For 16 years, Marvel served as chairman of the Legislature's Appropriations Committee.

Marvel was Speaker of the Legislature for two consecutive terms, from 1979-82.

Marvel retired for health reasons in November 1982 and died Dec. 2, 1986, at age 68.

GERALD T. WHELAN

The last lieutenant governor to come from Hastings was Gerald Whelan,

Rossen: New mayor sworn in

Continued from page A1

He said he had a lot of reasons.

"I want this community to be in a position, when my kids go off to college, that they have the opportunity to come back and raise their families, like I had the opportunity to do," he said. "Everything I've done on this council in the last four years has been because I'm interested in the best interest of the community and I want us to go to greatness."

Rossen said he expected city government to continue to operate as it has. He and City Administrator Joe Patterson will work closely together.

The city still has some final shuffling to do before things settle down.

who served from 1975-79 under Gov. J. James Exon.

Before that time, Whelan served as the city attorney in Hastings for five years. He also served as president of the State Board of Education.

Whelan was the first full-time lieutenant governor in Nebraska's history. He and Exon, his fellow Democrat, also were the first governor/lieutenant governor ticket elected during a general election in Nebraska.

After a failed attempt to succeed Exon as governor, Whelan moved back to Hastings. He continued to practice

Since Rossen is now mayor, his Third Ward seat on the council is open. The council voted unanimously to allow City Clerk Connie Hartman to advertise for the vacancy, with letters to be submitted to City Hall by Jan. 31.

At the next council meeting Feb. 15, the new member could be sworn in and a new council president will be selected.

After the meeting, Rossen said he was relieved the long day was approaching a finish.

"It's just been a very chaotic day," he said.

Rossen graduated from Holdrege High School and attended Kearney State College. He moved to Hastings in 1988, and he and Shelli have been married 17 years.

law until his death in January 1993 following a long battle with cancer.

Whelan served many years as legal counsel for the city Board of Public Works. Hastings Utilities' coal-fired power plant on East U.S. Highway 6 is named in his memory.

WILLIAM CONNOLLY

One of Nebraska's seven supreme court justices worked as a lawyer in Hastings for many years before being elevated to the judicial bench.

William Connolly served as a deputy county attorney for Adams County

right out of college from 1964-66.

In 1967, at age 29, Connolly became the Adams County Attorney and served in that position for the next six years. From 1972-91, Connolly had a private practice in Hastings.

In December 1991, Gov. Ben Nelson appointed Connolly as a judge on the newly formed Intermediate Court of Appeals. The next year, Connolly was appointed to serve as a judge for the state Court of Appeals.

For the last nine years, Connolly has served as a justice with the Nebraska Supreme Court. He represents the Fifth District, which covers south central and parts of southeastern Nebraska.

TOM OSBORNE

In the past five years, Tom Osborne, a Hastings native and statewide hero, has made the transformation from popular football coach to popular state politician.

Before going into politics, Osborne spent 36 years as a coach for the Nebraska Cornhusker football team. He was head coach from 1973-97, winning three national championships during that span.

After retiring from football in 1997, Osborne entered the political arena. Now 67, he is serving his third term as a Republican congressman representing Nebraska's 3rd District.

He currently is a member of the House Agriculture, Education and Resources committees.

Track: Anderson proposes two sites

Continued from page A1

But the location would be close enough to town that the spectators, racers and families still would be able to use Hastings' hotels, restaurants, water park and shopping venues.

The other location Anderson is looking into abuts Brickyard Park to the southwest. The land, zoned residential, is surrounded by the landfill, Hastings Industrial Park West and Garvey Elevator. Right now, he said, it has a pivot on

it. Before a track could be built, the land would need to be rezoned agricultural.

The track could bring a whole new possibility for Brickyard Park, he said. The would-be track's elevation, low on the south end, would help keep the noise down.

However, that site also lacks sewer lines, which would need to be installed no matter what kind of development goes in.

Anderson asked to give the presentation in hopes that the

commission could tell him which property might be most acceptable, but Development Services Director Tamara Babcock said without an application, the commission can't do anything that would indicate prejudice.

"You are a recommending body, and you don't want to do anything that will prejudice you before you make a decision," she told the commission. "We do in some ways have to be very careful about not prejudicing any formal activity we make."

Anderson and Dee Haussler,

Hastings Economic Development Corp. executive director, said they would attempt to file an application today and aim to be on the agenda for a work session scheduled to discuss dog kennels Feb. 2.

"On my side of the ticket," Anderson said, "I'd like to bring this track here, and the thousands of people it would bring, and the thousands of dollars to the community, and the couple hundred jobs it would bring."

Micotil: Rancher's widow files suit

Continued from page A1

As he walked through a barn, another cow charged into a fence panel, knocking him to the ground and forcing the needle into his body.

He died a short time later. "Eli Lilly failed to adequately warn cattle produc-

ers using Micotil ... about the drug's extreme dangerousness to humans, about the potential for death resulting from accidental injection, about the lack of an effective treatment or antidote for this drug while alternative drugs with effective treatments and anti-

dotes were available," the lawsuit says.

The lawsuit asks for a jury trial and unspecified damages.

Dennis Erpelding, spokesman for Elanco, did not immediately return a call to his office seeking comment.

Last year, South Dakota cattleman Terry Ehrich died after

accidentally injecting himself with Micotil.

Ehrich was working at his Rockham ranch when he tried to administer the drug to a head of cattle.

The animal moved and the syringe went into Ehrich. He died about 3 1/2 hours later.



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