

Nichols leaves Douglas with 6 month's pay

By Kathryn Reed

Jim Nichols is walking away from his job as Douglas County manager with a check for more than \$115,000 – the equivalent of six month's pay, plus sick and vacation pay.

At the Jan. 21 meeting it was stressed that Nichols neither resigned nor was he fired. Instead it was a mutual agreement between Nichols and the commissioners for him to leave his position after 16 months on the job because there was a belief he could not longer be effective.



Jim Nichols

Had he been let go by the board, Nichols' contract stated he would have been given two month's notice, at which time he would have remained on the job, and then been entitled to six month's pay.

He practically got that – except he didn't have to work those two months. Nichols has not been on the job since Jan. 12, but is on the payroll through Jan. 29.

There was no discussion about the payout, just the vote.

A few letters opposing the deal were submitted, but no one from the public spoke.

Discussion then ensued about what happens next.

Commissioners on a 4-1 vote agreed to ask Larry Werner to be the interim county manager. Commissioner Steve Thaler said no. He preferred to seek an interim from within the county. It is the commission's desire Werner would work for a year, giving the county time to find someone suitable for the indefinite future.

Werner was the interim county manager before Nichols was hired. At that time he made \$12,500/month.

The board then voted to have Mimi Moss, community development director, be acting county manager until a long-term interim is selected. She has filled in before as county manager.

Christine Vuletich, who is the assistant county manager, was bypassed for the short-term chief spot because she is tasked with putting together the next fiscal budget.

It was pointed out that with three of the commissioners' being up for re-election this year it may make it difficult to easily find a county manager. Plus, many residents and employees are less than satisfied with how the current board is doing business, so the semblance of dysfunction could be a turn off.