

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

For more than a year, the Chase County Planning Commission has been operating short of one board member.

Chairman Charley Colton said it has been difficult finding people willing to serve on the board that deals with zoning issues throughout Chase County.

And, on top of it, four of the five current board members have been serving since the commission organized in the late 1990s.

Besides Colton, those who have been serving since the commission was formed include Dave Bauerle, Shona Heim and Dennis Strand. Bauerle serves as commission secretary and the fifth board member, John Engbrecht, is vice chair.

Billie Muehlenkamp serves as the county zoning officer.

Colton, who also is the Chase County Historical Society president, said the County Planning Commission originally formed in the late 1990s with nine board members.

The first full year or more was spent developing the county's first Comprehensive Plan and zoning regulations.

The board later dropped to six members due to difficulty finding people to serve, he said. Two from each commissioner district are to serve on the board, appointed by the commissioner in that district, Colton said.

The vacant board position came open when Duane Dinnel left the area to serve on a mission trip for an extended period of time.

The planning commission meets quarterly unless a special hearing is needed, Colton said. Muehlenkamp, who works in the county roads department, handles the day-to-day issuance of permits, he said.

Much of the commission's work, Colton said, deals with livestock operations and the permits and/or conditional use designations that may be required.

Being the historical buff that he is, Colton noted that Chase County attempted to form a County Planning Commission in the 1960s, "but it never happened," he said.

County Planning Commissions became required in Nebraska in the 1990s.

Anyone interested in serving on the County Planning Commission can contact Colton or their commissioner.

Currently, the vacancy on the board is in District I served by Commissioner Chuck Vette of Wauneta.