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**HOLZHAUER FORD SHERIFF SALE RESCHEDULED
RAISES FOR ADMINISTRATORS, CSD STAFF**

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Cherokee Chronicle Times

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Crime scene investigators arrive at the rural Cherokee residence Tuesday where the alleged murder of Christopher Wheeler took place. Inset: Suspect Richard Hammond. CHRONICLE TIMES photo by ERIN RYDGREN

Cherokee County faces potential loss of 24-hour deputy, 911 services due to budget constraints

BY ERIN RYDGREN
Cherokee County's latest grapple with a tightened budget could force Sheriff Derek Scott to cut staff or face a hiring freeze, potentially jeopardizing 24-hour sheriff's patrols and the county's ability to maintain local 911 services, according to discussions at the April 15 Board of Supervisors meeting.

Sheriff Scott informed the board that since his proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year was frozen at the current level, he was struggling to find funds to provide man-

dated raises for his deputies and jail staff.

He warned that without competitive wages, the county is already seeing employees leave for higher-paying positions in neighboring counties, like the recent departure of a jailer to O'Brien County for a \$4 per hour increase.

"With this budget that I have for next year, to give the 70-cent raises, I'm not going to be able to hire or I'm going to have to cut a spot. Which would you prefer?" Scott

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MURDER IN RURAL CHEROKEE

Hammond ran over Sutherland man with Silverado, sheriff alleges

BY TOM CULLEN
A Cherokee man was arrested for murdering a Sutherland man who was working on a pickup in rural Cherokee.

Richard Hammond, 66,

was booked into the Cherokee County Jail without bond around noon Monday for first-degree murder, according to an arrest warrant filed in Cherokee County District Court. The charge stems from

an incident around 12 hours earlier. An affidavit filed by the Cherokee County Sheriff alleged Hammond ran over Christopher Wheeler of Sutherland at a residence in the 2000 mile of Highway 3.

Two witnesses told an investigating officer that Hammond "100% intended" to run over Wheeler with a Chevy Silverado at an acreage in rural Cherokee. The witnesses ad-

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Cherokee County Sheriff Derek Scott speaks to the Board of Supervisors Tuesday. CHRONICLE TIMES photo by ERIN RYDGREN



TONY PUFFETT

Tony Puffett appointed to Cherokee City Council

At her first meeting, Ankrum votes against selection

BY ALLISON MOORE

In a 3-1 vote, the Cherokee City Council appointed Tony Puffett as its newest council member.

The council interviewed four candidates for the at-large council seat last week, according to newly appointed City Administrator Theresa Pudenz. Councilwoman Elizabeth Ankrum, who was appointed to the Ward 2 council seat earlier this month, said she didn't participate in the interview process. Ankrum provided the sole dissenting vote to Puffett's appointment.

"Nay, sorry," Ankrum stated at the council meeting Tuesday. She didn't specify a reason for her vote.

Puffett said he's been a businessman in Cherokee for over three decades and since retiring, he's more than eager to fill the last vacant council seat.

"I'm very ready," Puffett told the Chronicle Times after the council session April 22.

Councilmen Wayne Pingel and John Nitz and Councilwoman Amy Loughlin — now the only three members who've served in the position for more than a week — voted to appoint Puffett.

"Cherokee is lucky to have four applicants that were very good," Nitz said before the vote. "It was a difficult choice to make, and if you're not se-

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SENATE OKS BILL TO EASE CHEROKEE COUNTY BURDEN

Evans: 'It will save our county budget thousands annually'

BY ERIN RYDGREN

Cherokee County is poised to receive significant financial relief after the Iowa Senate unanimously passed Senate File 57 on Wednesday, April 16. The legislation mandates the state to reimburse counties for the costs of jailing inmates from the Civil Commitment Unit for Sex Offenders who commit criminal offenses. This follows the unanimous passage of its companion bill, House File 643, in the Iowa House in mid-March. The bill will now head to Gov. Kim Reynolds' desk for her signature.

Senate File 57, introduced by Senator Lynn Evans (R-Aurelia), addresses a long-standing financial burden on Cherokee County, where the CCUSO facility is located. Currently, the county bears the costs associated with housing and caring for individuals from the unit who commit crimes and are subsequently jailed.

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KADING PLEDGES 30 HOUSING UNITS BY NEXT SUMMER

City council approves site plans for up to 84 units

DEVELOPER: 'I WANT TO GET DIRT MOVING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE'

BY ALLISON MOORE

The Cherokee City Council approved site plans from Kading Properties of Urbandale to build 84 townhomes near Rock Island Avenue before 2028.

The development and property management company purchased 15.9 acres of

land from the city for \$1 in December in an effort to establish more affordable housing. Chase Hauschilt, development specialist, told the city council Tuesday that Kading has aimed to work in Cherokee since identifying housing as a primary concern nearly two years ago. Historic area flooding in June only heightened that need.

"We had an interest in Cherokee beforehand, but after the flooding this past summer, it's only exasperated the issue," Hauschilt said. "We're happy to be here as part of your community and help provide more market-rate housing in Cherokee."

The Iowa Economic Development Authority awarded Kading a grant dedicated to disaster recovery efforts in Cherokee, according to Hauschilt, who didn't specify how much the state agency pledged towards the condo-

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Tomahawk Relays Court announced

Congratulations to these king and queen candidates for Cherokee's Tomahawk Relays. Back row: Kyler Ducommun, Colton Happe, Keegan Volkert and Trapper Rogge. Front row: Lilly Jorgensen, Keylee Gregg, Adrie Ducommun and Alli Booth. Not pictured are Lydia Hart and Wyatt Johnson. Coronation will be on Friday, April 25, with relays to follow on Monday and Tuesday. Congrats to the Tomahawk Court!

CCUSO clinical director retires

SEX OFFENDER UNIT SEEKS FOURTH DIRECTOR IN SIX YEARS

The Cherokee Civil Commitment Unit for Sex Offenders is seeking another clinical director, its fourth in six years.

The State of Iowa posted an opening

for CCUSO's clinical director last month.

"The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services Division of State-Operated Specialty Care is seeking an energetic and forward-thinking clinical director to join the team at the Civil Commitment Unit for Sex Offenders," reads a job posting the state posted to LinkedIn four weeks ago. The state is no longer accepting applicants, according to the social media website.

The clinical director supervises CCUSO staff and oversees treatment of

around 150 sex offenders committed to CCUSO. The director reports directly to the assistant superintendent of Cherokee MHI.

The job was occupied for around a year by Melinda Masters, a licensed social worker who has served at the helm of the Florida Civil Commitment Center for Sexual Offenders. Masters told the Cherokee Chronicle Times that she was proud of the work the civil commitment unit has accomplished during her year at

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