

County pumps brakes on redistricting plan

BY BRIAN MCCAULEY
bmccauley@cherryroad.com

One week after voting 4-1 to pay Haystaq DNA of Washington D.C. \$18,750 to complete the county's redistricting by the end of the year, Miami County commissioners unanimously agreed to cancel the agreement and seek help from another company.

Commissioners approved the agreement with Haystaq DNA during their Nov. 19 meeting, with Commissioner Tyler Vaughan voting against the motion.

"I think it's a state function, and they should pay for this," Vaughan said, adding that the state requires redistricting but doesn't provide the tools to do so.

Miami County Administrator Shane Krull said Haystaq DNA specializes in the task and recently helped Johnson County with its redistricting.

One week later, the commissioners discussed the redistricting plan again during their study session and regular meeting Wednesday, Nov. 26.

The commissioners discussed concerns about the cost of the agreement and Haystaq DNA, both of which have been criticized by some Miami County residents on social media after the commission's decision on Nov. 19.

Krull said the county is out of compliance with state statute because there is more than 10 percent difference between the smallest and largest commission districts.

Krull said the commission last reviewed district boundaries in 2022, when there was a 9.22 percent variance, which



File photo

One week after hiring a Washington D.C. company to complete redistricting in Miami County, members of the Miami County Commission decided to cancel the agreement and seek a request for proposals (RFP) from other qualified companies that could complete the task.

was just within allowance. The state requires district boundaries to be reviewed every three years, and the variance is now out of compliance, Krull said.

In order to get in compliance and allow for some growth over the next three years, Krull estimated that about 1,200 people may need to be moved out of District 4, which is represented by Tyler Vaughan and covers the Spring Hill area. It is the county's most populated district with 7,918 people.

Krull said another 500 people may need to be moved out of District 1, which is represented by Jene Vickrey and covers the Louisburg area.

There are less than 7,000 people in District 5, which is the least populated district and covers the rural portions of the county. It

is represented by Keith Diediker.

Other districts include District 2, which is represented by Paul Scruggs and covers the Paola area, and District 3, which is represented by George Pretz and covers the Osawatomie area.

Miami County Clerk Laura Epp previously said Miami County has 89 precincts that are divided into 143 precinct parts because of other boundaries, such as school districts.

Maintaining those precincts is one of the goals Krull listed for the planned redistricting, as well as keeping current commissioners in their districts, ensuring legal compliance with state statutes, and getting back to census cycles so the county can get data at the precinct level and handle redistricting

in-house moving forward.

Krull said the county is out of sequence with the release of census information down to the precinct levels, and what the county currently has certified from the Secretary of State's Office is at the township level.

During the Nov. 26 commission meeting, Commissioner Scruggs said the cost is his concern, and he'd like the county to consider other options, such as attempting to do it in-house or seeking help from local companies.

"Whether it's a 20-grand issue or a quarter million, the process should be very similar," Scruggs said when it comes to being frugal with taxpayer dollars.

There also was some discussion about using the free Dave's Redistricting App, like a resident

previously suggested.

During the Nov. 19 meeting, Miami County Clerk Laura Epp said the service is not a certified Geographic Information System (GIS) software for legal redistricting, and it lacks precision and boundary alignments, as well as not being able to generate official shape files or data formats often required by the county's GIS systems.

Haystaq's agreement did state that it planned to use Dave Redistricting App as a resource during the process.

Krull said that if the county breaks its contract with Haystaq DNA, a payment would likely need to be made to cover the hourly work that Haystaq completed during the week since the contract's approval.

The commissioners

unanimously agreed to break the contract with Haystaq DNA and seek a request for proposals (RFP) from qualified companies for help with the county's redistricting.

Krull asked the commissioners to outline exactly what they would like in the RFP, and Commission Chair George Pretz tasked commissioners Vaughan and Scruggs with coming up with RFP parameters to present at the next commission meeting.

Krull estimated that the new plan could push the redistricting process to around the end of February 2026.

Commissioners expressed a desire to get it completed as soon as possible so residents considering running for elected office next year will know what district they are in.

Paola man linked to two stolen vehicle reports

BY BRIAN MCCAULEY
bmccauley@cherryroad.com

PAOLA – A 23-year-old Paola man was arrested twice in the span of four days after two reported incidents involving stolen vehicles.

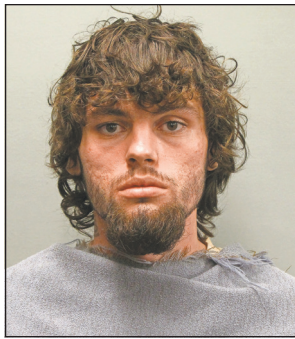
The first incident took place on the morning of Monday, Nov. 24, when a vehicle was reportedly stolen from the Park Plaza 66 parking lot in Paola.

The vehicle theft was reported at about 9:40 a.m. Monday, and as officers were responding to

the area, a Miami County Sheriff's Office deputy observed the vehicle in the 400 block of East Peoria Street, according to a news release from the Paola Police Department.

As a result of the investigation, Skyler Chacon, 23, of Paola was taken into custody for the automobile theft and booked into the Miami County Jail. He is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law, according to the release.

The stolen vehicle was left unlocked, running



Miami County Sheriff's Office

Skyler Chacon, 23, of Paola was arrested twice in a span of four days after two incidents involving reports of stolen vehicles.

and unattended at the gas station.

"With the cold weather

approaching, the department wants to remind all citizens to properly secure their vehicles in these situations," the Paola Police Department release stated.

Four days later, at 1:08 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 28, Paola police officers located a vehicle that had been reported stolen out of Overland Park, according to a separate news release from the Paola Police Department.

Officers attempted to conduct a traffic stop with the vehicle at the intersection of Holly Lane and Baptiste Drive, but the

driver fled and merged onto northbound U.S. Highway 169, according to the release.

The vehicle was pursued, with assistance from the Miami County Sheriff's Office, until the area of U.S. 169 and 215th Street, where stop sticks were deployed by members of the Spring Hill Police Department, according to the release.

The driver of the fleeing vehicle lost control, and the vehicle came to a stop in the median just north of 215th Street, according to the release.

Chacon, who was the driver of the vehicle, was taken into custody and booked into the Miami County Jail on charges of fleeing and elude, reckless driving, no driver's license and numerous other traffic infractions, according to the release.

There were no injuries reported during the incident.

The case remains under investigation, and the Paola Police Department emphasized that the suspect is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.



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Jeremy Gulban
Publisher

THE MIAMI COUNTY REPUBLIC

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