By Jan Rahn
Managing Editor

A new commissioner was assigned last week to fill the void of James Deaver who passed away Jan. 13.

Steve Tucker of Venango was sworn in the afternoon of Feb. 6 following a half day of interviews in the Perkins County courtroom.

Deaver was still serving as a commissioner in the county at the time of his death—a role he had filled since 1978.

According to Perkins County Clerk Rita Long, it was a hard choice between seven county residents who applied for the position of District 3 Commissioner.

The interviews went very well, said Long.

“No one took it lightly. They had done their homework and were interested in the position,” she said.

Long joined Perkins County Attorney Richard Roberts and Perkins County Treasurer Patsy Kroeker in the interview process.

Upon appointment, Tucker will now complete the term previously held by Deaver in 2014 and at that time the seat will be open for election.

The seven applicants’ names were drawn at random to be interviewed and of the seven, three chose to give an opening statement when offered to do so.

The process began at 9 a.m., with a lunch break at noon. Upon returning, there was approximately 15 minutes of open discussion by those conducting the interviews, and then a decision was made in open session following a motion by Long to appoint Tucker.

Long urges the seven quality applicants interested in the position to consider throwing their name in the hat for the 2014 election.

"Don't hesitate to pursue candidacy at election time and then let the people decide in 2014," said Long.

Other applicants included Martin Bremmer, Michael Dodson, Richard Thurin, Troy Grothman, JohnWoodmancy and Ted Deaver.

Commissioner Tucker

Tucker's interest in serving as Perkins County Commissioner is not something new. He had given it consideration in the past, and took it seriously when a few people asked if he would consider filling the District 3 position upon James Deaver's death.

"I was honored and humbled that the people in the third district would consider me for this position," said Tucker, who enjoys serving the community of Venango as a fireman and in various other areas.

As a resident for the past 25 years, Tucker said he feels he has a good handle on the current situations and challenges Perkins County faces.

"What I appreciated about my predecessor was, he would always listen, and then had the ability to explain why something was done the way it was done," said Tucker. "I hope to be able to do the same."

"The roads in the third district are the standard in the area," he said. "I have heard from people not only in Perkins county, but from this area comment on how good our roads are. After meeting with the road crew that takes care of these roads, I am confident that this will remain the case. These guys take pride in what they do and they are committed to maintaining that standard. That will make this job easier and I will be able to focus more on how this county can grow."

Tucker said the upcoming items for the commissioners are going to be interesting challenges as everyone faces the ramifications to the changes in the newly reformed health care law—the effect on county employee health insurance, and how will that affect the upcoming budget preparation.

"It's time to prepare and find ways to make us more efficient and still provide the essential services of the county," said Tucker.

With a B.S. degree in agronomy from the University of Nebraska, Tucker has farmed near Brandon for many years. He expects the trend that has taken place in the western part of the county for the last 20 years to continue and wishes to seek ways to position Perkins County to adapt to these changes.

Tucker is starting his third year as Venango Fire Chief. For over 20 years he has also served on the board of the Venango Rural Fire District. He and his wife, Rachel, have four children, Michael, a junior, Tyler in fourth grade, Kylie in third grade and Trevyn who will start kindergarten in the fall.

As Perkins County's newest commissioner, Tucker said, "I know a majority of the people here and I look forward to getting to know those whom I may not know as well."

Commissioner Duties

Those who serve as commissioners in the three districts of Perkins County take on several responsibilities.

Meetings are held twice monthly. Their duties include:

• Appointing individuals who serve in the following capacities: county physician, county surveyor, county engineer, noxious weed control superintendent, veteran service officer, civil

defense director, highway superintendent, the official newspaper and depositories for county funds.

- Appointing members to the fair board, health services foundation board, planning commission.
- Appointing board members to: Region II Developmental Disabilities Board, Region II Human Services Board, West Central Area on Aging Board, and Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department Board.
- Reviewing and approving or rejecting all claims presented to them.
- Sitting as board of equalization to hear protest of property valuations.
- Being responsible for all real and personal property owned by Perkins County.
- Approving or disapprovingtax exempt request.
- Providing general and medical assistance.
- Receiving reports from officials.
- Conducting hearing for the planning commissioner.
- Compiling the budget document that appropriates funds for the various departments.
- Any other matters that might be on a meeting agenda.