

Hall County's Sherlock takes a step up, to become state surveyor in 2018

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- Dec 23, 2017



Hall Co. Roads Superintendent Casey Sherlock is resigning from his current position to become the Nebraska State Surveyor. Sherlock begins his new position Jan. 2 in Lincoln. (Independent/Zach Mayhew)

As a 29-year-old, newly licensed land surveyor in 2005, Casey Sherlock felt he had a lot to offer and was ready to advance his career.

After working in Kearney for then-Buffalo County Surveyor Mitch Humphrey at Buffalo Surveying Corp., Sherlock decided to apply for the Hall County Public Works director/surveyor position. His hiring was approved by the Hall County Board of Supervisors.

Now, after 12 years of serving Hall County, Sherlock is resigning to begin his next career as the eighth Nebraska state surveyor, effective Jan. 1.

Sherlock said the current Nebraska state surveyor, Steven Cobb, contacted him, told him he would be retiring soon, and suggested Sherlock consider applying for the position. Once Cobb announced his retirement, Sherlock visited with him, met with the Nebraska Board of Educational Lands and Funds, and was appointed as the next Nebraska state surveyor.

"I was completely blown away," Sherlock said. "When I started surveying in 1996, working in part-time for a land surveyor, I never imagined I would ever be the Nebraska state surveyor. Even up until the last few years, it was probably nothing I could have ever thought I could achieve."

As he enters his new role, Sherlock credits Hall County for giving him the foundation he needed to succeed. He said the main thing he has learned is how to best interact with the public.

"The taxpayers are always critical of what we do as government agencies and employees," Sherlock said. "I think that is one area I have really grown in."

Sherlock added he also learned to defend every decision he makes, especially during budget time when the county board needed to make cuts.

"One thing I had to learn to do was get everything I possibly could for people of Hall County, especially in the rural areas," Sherlock said.

When he first started as Hall County Public Works director/surveyor, Sherlock said one of his highest priorities was bridges. At the time, he said there were 50 bridges that had a weight-restricted status, were considered "bad bridges," and needed to be replaced.

"I counted more than 75 bridges I have replaced in 12 years," he said. "I have overlaid over 140 miles of asphalt road. We have a total of 180 bridges and we've replaced about half of them. We've also got 180 miles of asphalt, so we've just about taken care of all the asphalt roads in the county in 12 years."

During his tenure, Sherlock added, he has helped push the Hall County Board of Supervisors to put more investment for its roads and bridges. He said he has also worked to keep the Road Department's equipment up-to-date.

"When I started, the average age of the roads department equipment was over 20 years old," Sherlock said. "In the heavy equipment world, you do not want to have your equipment be more than 10 to 15 years old."

But Sherlock's proudest achievement is helping to foster relationships with everyone in Hall County and its communities, including the City of Grand Island. Hall County Board Chairwoman Pam Lancaster called Sherlock a "longstanding, valued employee" and said she admired his ability to work with outside agencies to provide cost-effective services.

"Casey has been good about watching the dollars and providing a value with help with the county road repair," Lancaster said. "He has brought about a number of innovative ways of doing business that were cost-effective. That is to be admired. He has made the county better both financially and from a public works perspective. He has made Hall County a better place."

Shannon Callahan, streets superintendent for the city of Grand Island, said she met Sherlock when she first started with the city in August 2011. She said from day one, Sherlock has been a great support system for her.

“Casey has always been very forthcoming with information,” she said. “Either he had answers, ideas or he didn’t. I always appreciated that. In the role that we have, there are not many folks that have a job similar to you. So if you can find your counterparts in other organizations and develop a good working relationship, it really makes everybody more efficient in the long run.”

Callahan said Sherlock has “excellent” leadership skills. “With any of his staff that you visit with, you can see that resonate through the organization,” she said.

Steve Riehle — Hall County engineer who will become the Hall County surveyor upon Sherlock’s resignation — said when he served as public works director for Grand Island, he and Sherlock made a “really good team.”

“When he was down in the Emergency Operations Center and there was an ice storm or a snow storm, Casey was out here or out in the field. It was seamless,” Riehle said. “It didn’t matter who you talked to. I was on the phone with him or on the radio with him. I was talking with dispatch, we were on the same page, and linked.”

Lancaster, Callahan, Riehle and many others agree: Sherlock has made Hall County a better place.

“It is difficult to leave everything that I have done,” Sherlock said. “I am going to miss coming up with new ideas and new things to help get the job done as efficiently as possible.”