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Commissioners hold illegal meeting with mayor -- lawyer

No public notice was given of the Friday meeting between the Laramie County Commission and Mayor Rick Kaysen regarding the sale of land for a Menards home improvement store.

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CHEYENNE -- The Laramie County Commission held an illegal meeting Friday with Cheyenne Mayor Rick Kaysen and the assistant city attorney, a news media lawyer said.

The meeting was held to discuss a \$5.3 million land sale for a Menards home improvement store.

There was no public notice given of the meeting.

Under the state's open meetings law, each item of business to be discussed must be noticed to the public, media attorney Bruce Moats of Cheyenne said.

"It's a quorum, and they're discussing public business," Moats said. "They should notice that meeting."

The meeting dealt with a possible ownership stake the county may have in the property at the southeast corner of Dell Range Boulevard and Windmill Road.

County commissioners Gay Woodhouse and Diane Humphrey met with Kaysen and assistant city attorney John Knepper. County attorney Mark Voss also was present.

Voss said Monday the meeting did not violate the state open meetings law.

Voss said he thought the meeting was on the commissioners' weekly schedule. He noted that no action was taken during the meeting.

Humphrey, who serves as commission chairwoman, said the commissioners know the open meetings law and "try not to mess up."

The Friday meeting was scheduled the day before it took place, said Valerie Miller, executive assistant to the Laramie County Commission.

"That was kind of a last-minute deal," Humphrey said. "It's my fault."

Miller said, "We don't try to hide anything here."

Woodhouse agreed that there should have been an announcement of the meeting.

The meeting was held in the county commissioners' meeting room at the Historic Laramie County Courthouse. A WTE reporter walked into the meeting by chance.

The commissioners also met Monday in a closed session to discuss possible litigation. The WTE did not find out about that meeting until questioning Humphrey about the legality of the Friday meeting.

The open meetings law states that government officials who knowingly and willfully violate the law are guilty of a misdemeanor. The penalty is a fine not to exceed \$750.

Laramie County District Attorney Scott Homar could not be reached for comment Monday on whether he would investigate the matter.