

Civil Service - County

Top county official isn't just acting

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It was three years in the making, but George Newell finally may be able to drop the word "acting" from his title of acting county administrative officer.

After a long debate over the Board of Supervisor's selection of Newell, the county Civil Service Commission Wednesday certified Newell as the top county departmental head in a 3-2 vote.

His official appointment still requires a vote of approval by the county Board of Supervisors, but that is expected to occur Tuesday.

This morning, Newell said, "I'm pleased that the Civil Service Commission has certified me as qualified."

The change in job title isn't going to change his work, however. "It's still a hard job to do," he said.

SEE BACK PAGE



George Newell

Sentinel 10/13/83

Racial bias

Reagan's...

solved them all but we are making staying the course."

Top official

FROM PAGE 1

Until the commission certified the board's selection, Newell wasn't considered the full-fledged county administrative officer. County voters in 1954 gave the commission power to certify the board's choice.

Voting for certification were Commissioners C. Shelley Emerson, Katherine Beiers and Jack Samuelson.

Voting against certification were Commissioners Gaylord Noblitt and Ronald Berry, with Berry relinquishing his chairmanship to Emerson upon the vote.

"I feel rather strongly about this thing, particularly because of the 'stick it in your ear for three years' program," Berry said.

"I don't want to sign an ordinance certifying Mr. Newell, so I relinquish my powers of chairman," he added.

A majority of commissioners have refused to certify Newell in the past because of concerns he wasn't qualified.

Noblitt said Wednesday he still has this concern, and said the ordinance on qualifications for a county administrative officer calls for five years of experience.

Noblitt said he considers Newell as having only three years of experience.

Samuelson was the deciding vote, having refused to certify Newell in past votes. He said he believes Newell's performance as acting county administrative officer for three years qualifies him for the post.

Samuelson added Newell's unanimous support from liberal and conservative members of two Boards of Supervisors also was a deciding factor.

Commissioners Wednesday also unanimously recommended supervisors change the ordinance on qualifications to state that job experience can be substituted for required education.

But commissioners were unable to agree upon an alternative procedure on the dispute with supervisors over the methods used to select a county administrative officer.

So, they plan to inform supervisors they will stick with the procedure on the books. Both supervisors and commissioners must agree to any change in the procedure