

(AP) –Dundy County attorney Blake Edwards has been convicted of one theft charge and acquitted of two more in Keith County.

It was unclear Thursday June 28, whether Edwards remained in office, still prosecuting cases. Edwards didn't return calls from The Associated Press, and his lawyer declined to comment.

Ogallala radio station KOGA reports that Edwards was scheduled to be sentenced on Aug. 15 in Keith County District Court.

Edwards and his wife, Shirley, were charged in January 2011 with theft. Prosecutors said more than \$18,000 in Keith County diversion program funds was taken or mishandled. His wife had worked in the county attorney's office.

Blake Edwards said the money was used to purchase office equipment for the diversion program and to pay his office staff and wife for diversion program-related work not covered by their wages.

The charges against his wife were dropped later.

Edwards lost his re-election bid in 2010 and then found a post as county attorney in Dundy County, which also is in western Nebraska.

The jury acquitted the 50-year-old Edwards last week of two theft counts and found him guilty of one. The felony carries a maximum prison term of 20 years.

Edwards also was charged with two counts of evading income tax and three counts of filing fraudulent Nebraska tax returns, but they were dismissed.

The assistant counsel for discipline for the Nebraska Supreme Court, John Steele, said that he couldn't comment on whether any action was being contemplated against Edwards and his professional standing. But speaking in general terms, Steele said, the court could take action against any attorney who violates the Nebraska Rules of Professional Conduct.

A key provision of the rules says it would be professional misconduct for a lawyer who commits "a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer in other respects."

It's unclear whether the Dundy County commissioners will take any action regarding their county's chief prosecutor. They didn't immediately return calls from The Associated Press.

The clerk of the district court in Dundy County, Tony Lutz, said he didn't know whether Edwards was still on the job. Lutz declined to comment about what the commissioners might do. He noted that the board's next meeting was scheduled for July 2.