

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
May 15, 2007- SPECIAL MEETING

The Transylvania County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on Tuesday, May 15, 2007 at 8:00 a.m. in the Rogow Room of the Transylvania County Library. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss critical space needs issues in the County and to update the Board on the progress of the animal shelter.

Commissioners present were: Lynn Bullock, Chairman Jason Chappell, David Guice and Vice-Chairman Kelvin Phillips. Commissioner Daryle Hogsed was absent.

Others and Staff members present: County Manager Artie Wilson, Project Manager Larry Reece, Architect Rich Worley, Maintenance Director David McNeill, Finance Director Gay Poor, Clerk of Court Rita Ashe, Register of Deeds Cindy Ownbey, Sheriff David Mahoney, Board of Elections Director Judy Matthews, Health Director Steve Smith, Information Technology Director Dean Landreth and Clerk to the Board Trisha McLeod.

Media: *Times News*: Jonathan Rich
Transylvania Times: Kim MacQueen

There were approximately 15 people in the audience.

Chairman Chappell called the meeting to order and welcomed all those in attendance.

SPACE NEEDS

The Manager and Architect Rich Worley presented a Power Point slide show illustrating five (5) different options for providing solutions for critical space needs in the County. The Manager noted that the estimated costs and the time frame for completing each project have been included.

Option A

1. RENOVATE OLD LIBRARY- to accommodate County Administration Offices (\$1.3 million; 2007-2008)
2. DSS- 3RD FLOOR UPFIT/RENOVATION- to accommodate new Health Offices/Labs, etc. (\$1.0 million; 2007-2008)
3. COURTHOUSE RENOVATION AND EXPANSION- to accommodate security issues and expanding space needs of court system without expanding Clerk of Court until Tax Assessor, Tax Collector and Register of Deeds are relocated (\$2.5 million; 2008-2009)
4. PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY OPENS- existing Sheriff's Offices and Detention Center will be vacant (N/A; 2009-2010)
5. RENOVATE OLD LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER- to accommodate Tax Assessor, Tax Collections and Register of Deeds (\$0.7 million; 2009-2010)

6. RENOVATE OLD DETENTION CENTER- to accommodate Board of Elections, Building/Construction Permitting and Environmental Health (\$1.2 million; 2009-2010)
7. RENOVATE REMAINING COURTHOUSE SPACES- to accommodate expansion of Clerk of Court, District Attorney and other court support (\$0.7 million; 2010-2011)

Total estimated cost of Option A is \$7.4 million with projects to be completed 2007-2011.

Mr. Worley showed some of the preliminary drawings and explained where the potential renovations would be made to the old library, the current Administration Building, the courthouse and the Sheriff's Office.

Option B

1. RENOVATE OLD LIBRARY- to accommodate Tax Assessor, Tax Collections and Register of Deeds (\$1.3 million; 2007-2008)
2. DSS-3RD FLOOR UPFIT/RENOVATION- to accommodate County Administration Offices (temporary solution until Public Safety Building opens and renovations of another building can be completed) (\$1.0 million; 2007-2008)
3. COURTHOUSE RENOVATION AND EXPANSION- to accommodate security issues, expanding space needs for court system and Clerk of Court (\$3.2 million; 2008-2009)
4. PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY OPENS- existing Sheriff's Offices and Detention Center will be vacant (N/A; 2009-2010)
5. RENOVATE OLD LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER- to accommodate County Administration Offices that were temporarily located in DSS facility (\$0.7 million; 2009-2010)
6. RENOVATE OLD DETENTION CENTER- to accommodate Board of Elections, Building/Construction Permitting and Environmental Health (\$1.2 million; 2009-2010)
7. HEALTH MOVES TO 3RD FLOOR UPFIT SPACE- when Administration moves Health can occupy 3rd floor space (\$0.1 million; 2009-2010)

Total estimated cost of Option B is \$7.5 million with projects to be completed 2007-2010.

The Manager noted that #3 is different in Option B than #3 in Option A in that it allows for the renovation of the Courthouse to happen sooner by freeing up the space in the Courthouse currently occupied by the Tax Assessor/Collector and Register of Deeds. Mr. Worley showed the drawings for the 3rd floor of the DSS building and explained what the renovations would be.

Option C

1. RENOVATE OLD LIBRARY- to accommodate Board of Elections (\$0.7 million; 2007-2008)

2. DSS- 3RD FLOOR UPFIT/RENOVATION- to accommodate County Administration Offices (temporary solution until Public Safety Building and renovation of another building can be completed) (\$1.0 million; 2007-2008)
3. COURTHOUSE RENOVATION AND EXPANSION- to accommodate security issues, expanding space needs for court system without expanding Clerk of Court until Tax Assessor, Tax Collector and Register of Deeds are relocated (\$2.5 million; 2008-2009)
4. PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY OPENS- existing Sheriff's Offices and Detention Center will be vacant (N/A; 2009-2010)
5. RENOVATE OLD LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER- to accommodate Tax Assessor, Tax Collections and Register of Deeds (\$0.7 million; 2009-2010)
6. RENOVATE OLD DETENTION CENTER- to accommodate County Administration Offices that were temporarily located in DSS facility (\$1.2 million; 2009-2010)
7. RENOVATE REMAINING COURTHOUSE SPACES- to accommodate expansion of Clerk of Court (\$0.7 million; 2010-2011)
8. HEALTH MOVES TO 3RD FLOOR UPFIT SPACE- when Administration moves, Health can occupy 3rd floor space (\$0.1 million; 2010-2011)
9. LEAVE BUILDING/CONSTRUCTION PERMITTING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IN CURRENT LOCATION (N/A)

Total estimated cost of Option C is \$6.9 million with projects to be completed 2007-2011.

The Manager and Mr. Worley noted that in Option C the cost of renovating the old library is less than the in the previous options. The Board of Elections would need more open space, therefore decreasing the construction costs that would be associated with adding walls to create office space.

Option D

1. SELL OLD LIBRARY- projected value \$1.5 million (-\$1.5 million; 2007-2008)
2. DSS- 3RD FLOOR UPFIT/RENOVATION- to accommodate County Administration Offices (temporary solution until Public Safety Building opens and renovation of another building can be completed) (\$1.0 million; 2007-2008)
3. COURTHOUSE RENOVATION AND EXPANSION- demolish existing Administration Building and construct new building that would be connected to existing courthouse; the new facility would be multi-story to accommodate security issues and space needs for Tax Assessor, Tax Collector, Clerk of Court and Register of Deeds (\$5.5 million; 2008-2010)
4. CONSTRUCT NEW PARKING GARAGE- existing parking will not be adequate to service the new facility; a new parking structure would be provided at a projected cost of \$20,000 per space; assumes 150 vehicle spaces will be provided (\$3.5 million; 2008-2010)
5. PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY OPENS- existing Sheriff's Offices and Detention Center will be vacant (N/A; 2009-2010)

6. RENOVATE OLD LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER- to accommodate Administration Offices that were temporarily located in DSS facility (\$0.7 million; 2009-2010)
7. RENOVATE OLD DETENTION CENTER- to accommodate Board of Elections, Building/Construction Permitting and Environmental Health (\$1.2 million; 2010-2011)
8. HEALTH MOVES TO 3RD FLOOR UPFIT SPACE- when Administration moves, Health can occupy 3rd floor space (\$0.1 million; 2010-2011)

Total estimated cost of Option D is \$10.5 million with projects to be completed 2007-2011.

The Manager commented that #3 in Option D would provide approximately 16,500 square feet of space which meets some of the short-term needs.

Option E

1. SELL OLD LIBRARY- Projected value \$1.5 million (-\$1.5 million; 2007-2008)
2. DSS-3RD FLOOR UPFIT/RENOVATION- to accommodate Health space needs (\$1.0 million; 2007-2008)
3. COURTHOUSE RENOVATION AND EXPANSION- construct new building that would include new courthouse (District Court, Superior Court, Court Support, NCDOC, Juvenile Justice, District Attorney, Public Defender, etc.; based upon previously submitted space needs study this facility would be approximately 60,000 square feet.) (\$18.4 million; 2008-2011)
4. PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY OPENS- existing Sheriff's Offices and Detention Center will be vacant (N/A; 2009-2010)
5. RENOVATE OLD LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER- to accommodate Administration Offices (\$0.7 million; 2009-2010)
6. RENOVATE OLD DETENTION CENTER- to accommodate Board of Elections, Building/Construction Permitting and Environmental Health (\$1.2 million; 2010-2011)

Total estimated cost of Option E is \$19.8 million with projects to be completed 2007-2011.

The Manager stated that Option E meets the long-term needs in accordance with the space needs study.

Discussion:

Commissioner Guice asked Mr. Worley how he determined the value of the old library property. Secondly he questioned if 60,000 square feet would be enough space if the goal is to provide a courthouse facility that lasts over 50 years. Additionally he asked how the dollar amount per square foot was projected for a new courthouse facility. Mr. Worley replied saying that his cost projections were high, sometimes ranging between \$250 and \$300 per square foot. He said his hope was to provide realistic projections but

noted the difficulty in projecting future construction costs. Mr. Worley stated that he used the figures from the space needs study to calculate the space that would be needed in a new courthouse facility. Commissioner Guice added that at the time the space needs study was completed, the County was not required to provide space for a Public Defenders' Office and NC DOC was not included in the study. He stated that he believes the estimated value of the old library is too low based on what other properties are selling for. The Manager stated that Realtor Rob McKown estimated the value at \$1.5 million based on the size of the lot, surrounding property values, etc. Mr. Reece added that we made the assumption that the County would have to spend approximately \$700,000 to make the building useable so whoever would purchase the building for use would have to refurbish it to some extent.

The Manager stated that he researched the cost of renting space for County Administration. With storage space included, Administration would require approximately 9,000 square feet. The realtors he contacted estimated the cost of leasing this amount of space at \$17 or \$18 per square foot per year, or \$162,000 per year. The realtors did not know of any space available at this size. He added that money could be saved in the mean time by moving forward with the renovations to the DSS facility and temporarily housing Administration there until other space is available.

The Manager summarized all the options and noted that the estimates in Options A, B and C are similar. He stated that the benefit to Option B is that it allows the renovations to the courthouse to happen quicker. He stated that the problem with Option C is that it leaves Building and Permitting where they are now and it provides the Board of Elections with more space than they need. Option D provides more space than the other options and Option E meets all the long term needs of the County. The Manager worked with Mr. Worley and Mr. Reece to map out several viable options which provide the needed space for each department.

Chairman Chappell asked why there would be no walls in the old library if it was renovated for the Board of Elections. The Manager responded saying that the Board of Elections needs more open space than office space so the plan would be just to renovate the existing offices and leave an open floor plan. Mr. Worley echoed the Manager's comments. He added that the plan would be to refurbish the existing offices and not add in new partitions, doors, or walls which would significantly increase the cost.

Commissioner Phillips asked what the square footage is in the old library and Administration. The Manager said that the old library is approximately 8,500 sq. ft. and Administration is 3,800 sq. ft. He added that if Administration moved into the old library, they would not be using the entire 8,500 sq. ft because the Children's Wing would be converted into a multi-purpose room. Commissioner Phillips said with all the renovations, we are looking at adding approximately 26,000 square feet of space. He said if the value of the properties is taken into consideration, it may be advantageous to look at property to build upon instead. The Manager stated that property in the downtown area is scarce and expensive.

Chairman Chappell requested clarification on the preliminary plans for the Administration Building and Courthouse. Mr. Worley said the original proposal was to construct a courtroom that would accommodate 90-100 people. After the Courthouse Security Committee meeting on Friday, members agreed that a larger courtroom was needed that could accommodate approximately 170 people and include a jury box. By extending the current Administration Building into the parking area by approximately 24 feet, there would be enough space to construct a larger courtroom. Commissioner Guice pointed out that this plan, accepted by the Courthouse Security Committee, addresses security issues but does not address the overall space needs of the County. The Manager stated that the renovations would provide some additional space until other offices are relocated.

Commissioner Guice recalled during the Planning Workshops that Staff presented different scenarios for funding capital needs for the County and the school system, such as the Land Transfer Tax or borrowing money. He asked if the recommendations were the same at this point. The Manager said that before Staff can give a recommendation, direction is needed from the Board on which option to take. He added that he wants to minimize the amount of money the County has to borrow because the debt service is expensive.

Commissioner Phillips asked Mr. Worley if the cost of moving Administration temporarily to the DSS building would be the same as the construction costs for moving the Health Department to the same space. Mr. Worley explained that the only additional costs incurred would be when Administration moves out of the building. The Manager said, while this is a viable option, moving Administration temporarily to the DSS building delays any additional Health Department programs.

Commissioner Bullock commented that most of these options provide only short-term solutions. The Manager stated he hopes these options could provide adequate space for 15-20 years but sooner or later a new courthouse facility will be needed. Commissioner Bullock asked if it would be more feasible to build a new facility on existing property or near the new Public Safety Facility. The Manager stated that a courthouse facility can be built on the existing site but it will take up the entire property site which then presents parking issues.

Commissioner Guice said that at one time the County looked at the current site for building a new courthouse facility. He asked what impact the UDO would have on building a facility on the existing site. The Manager replied that the UDO would have a tremendous impact and significantly increase the cost.

Commissioner Bullock said he wants to see the Board make good decisions and maybe it would be better to build a new courthouse and avoid having to address space needs every few years. He said it seems like a great deal of money to spend for renovations only to have to address these issues again. The Manager said the long term needs could be taken care of with Option E but the route the County takes depends on the Board of Commissioners' vision for the community. He added that it is important to do what we

can afford to do but a new courthouse would be the most efficient option. Commissioner Guice said a lot of citizens feel very strongly about the courthouse being the centerpiece of the community. Commissioner Bullock said it is not large enough to accommodate Staff and services so a decision needs to be made about what to do with it. Chairman Chappell asked if the costs associated with Option E include the purchase of property. The Manager responded that the figures reflect building a new facility on existing property.

Commissioner Guice stated since the process began with planning the new Public Safety Facility, costs have increased significantly. His concern is that the projected cost of building a new courthouse facility will change as well. The Manager explained that the reason the costs increased for the Public Safety Facility was mainly because the scope of the project changed.

Mr. Reece stated that the renovations will not address all the space and security issues. He said that these issues will not be resolved until the County decides to build a new courthouse facility that is designed to handle the volume of people that come to that courthouse.

Chairman Chappell invited comments from the public.

Marshall McCallie, Citizen: Mr. McCallie asked for a point of clarification. He asked if Commissioners decided to build a new courthouse, would the Tax Office and the Register of Deeds remain in the old courthouse. The Manager replied that a new facility could be constructed near the Public Safety Facility. The Tax Office and Register of Deeds would be moved to the new facility, but not County Administration. He noted that those offices do not necessarily have to be moved to the new facility, but a new facility would provide the space they need and give them the ability to protect records, etc.

Jack Hudson, Citizen: Mr. Hudson asked how many square feet would be provided in a new courtroom at the current Administration building. The Manager said it has not yet been designed, but would be designed to accommodate 170 people. Mr. Hudson said seems as though the County is taking a band-aid approach to the space problem. He suggested constructing a courtroom that is attached to the new Public Safety Facility to address security issues. The Manager said a courtroom is already included in the plans for the purposes of holding first appearances for inmates. A new courthouse facility would be adjacent to the Public Safety Facility. He noted that Commissioners have not approved building a new courthouse facility. Mr. Hudson encouraged the Commissioners to seriously consider building a new facility that would take care of everyone's needs.

Mr. Hudson also expressed his concern with selling the old library. He noted that he is the President of the Transylvania County Historical Society and Vice President of the Heritage Coalition. He said they do not have the money to purchase and renovate the old library but mentioned that there are grants available from the Joint Historic Properties Commission. He believes the public will step forth with assistance because they know

how important a museum would be for the County, just like they stepped forth to help build the new library. He believes a museum would attract tourists and be an economic asset to the County. Mr. Hudson encouraged the Commissioners to consider making the old library a museum.

Commissioner Bullock commented that he does not want to delay new programs at the Health Department. Commissioner Guice said another possibility to address space and security could be to split the Criminal and Civil divisions of the Clerk of Court's office and work on any staffing issues that may arise as a result of the split. He suggested researching whether this has been done in other counties and what problems they faced as a result of splitting the offices. He also commented that if everything is moved to a new facility, the County will have to sell more properties than just the old library. Commissioner Guice said we have to weigh the impact of all the decisions we make.

Commissioner Phillips said the issue of splitting the Clerk's office was discussed briefly at the Security Committee meeting and the Clerk of Court is opposed to the idea. Commissioner Guice said the option should not be taken off the table and the decision has to be made by the Board of Commissioners.

ANIMAL SHELTER

The Manager presented information to the Board about the animal shelter project. He stated that the fees and costs associated with building a new animal shelter are estimated at approximately \$1.1 million which does not include any donated funds.

• Construction	\$857,000
• Fees	\$ 68,560
• Contingency 10%	\$ 92,556
• FF&E	<u>\$ 25,000</u>
	\$1,043,116

He added that the cost to the County would be decreased by any monies received from the private sector. The Manager pointed out that when planning for the project began, the estimated cost of construction was \$600,000-\$700,000. The costs have increased significantly as a result of rising construction costs. The County has set aside \$750,000 already for this project. He added that the County is prepared to go out for bids on the project by the summer and he hopes to present the designs to the Board within the next month or two.

Health Director Steve Smith commented that animal shelters are complex facilities in terms of design. Mr. Reece added that the County will be looking to minimize costs.

Closing:

The Manager asked for direction from the Board or if there were other options they wanted to Staff to consider. Chairman Chappell thanked Mr. Worley for his work on the options presented to the Board.

Mr. Jack Hudson asked to address the Board once more. He urged the Commissioners to incorporate “green” construction and build energy efficient buildings.

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner Bullock moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Phillips and unanimously carried.**

Jason R. Chappell, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha D. McLeod
Clerk to the Board