

Traverse County Commission
Special Board Meeting
October 1, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Commission Chairman Kevin Leininger. Other Commissioners present included Dave Salberg, Tom Monson, and Mark Gail. Todd Johnson was absent. Also present was Richard Engan from Engan Associates to give a presentation regarding the proposed new courthouse. The rules of the Board were given.

Engan went over the 2012 study along with the 2016 court security assessment. One of the comments in the 2016 study was that remodeling would delay the building of a new courthouse, which Engan supports. The primary reasons for considering a new courthouse are: energy efficiency, which will provide better heating and cooling, as well as greatly reduce costs; provide better service to the public; and to improve the health, security, and safety for employees and the public. Engan went over the structural, efficiency, HVAC, security, and code concerns.

Engan noted that the stone foundation was built without a footing, causing settling with cracks, and causing the mortar between stones to turn to sand or disappear, creating voids between stones. The building is hard to use efficiently, as the configuration of the building and construction type places limits on how a remodeling or expansion program could be accomplished. For security concerns, the public can enter the existing courthouse in multiple ways through unobserved entrances. For code concerns, one is the fire safety, as there is no fire alarm or sprinkler system, and there is only one way out of the upstairs. Engan then went over the proposed floor plan and the cost estimate.

Leininger asked for comments from the public.

Dean Frisch asked how much debt Traverse County should take on. He gave a handout to the Board that showed his calculation of the estimated debt load for Traverse County per registered voter. Traverse County Auditor/Treasurer Kit Johnson said that this number can be misleading, there are a lot of Traverse County property owners who don't live in Traverse County, so they would not be a registered voter in Traverse County. Frisch said that the registered voters are the ones that use the Courthouse. County Recorder LeAnn Peyton said that we see a lot more than just registered voters that use our courthouse.

There was a question regarding the life expectancy of a new building versus renovating the current courthouse. Engan said that the new building would have a 50 – 100 year life expectancy, depending on if we can keep moisture out. A renovation would need a good structural system which we do not have.

County Attorney Matt Franzese asked if there was an estimate of cost for a renovation. Engan said that the study done in 2012 would be roughly \$2 million in today's dollars, not including the expansion of the parking lots. Renovation would be disruptive, the functional layout wouldn't be accomplished, and the security issues would not be fixed. Renovation would be more expensive than starting from scratch and there would be a much shorter life span on the

building. Engan said that he has done a lot of remodeling projects, and that this courthouse is not a good candidate for doing that.

Walter Schmidke said that we need to do something different with the security in the court room. Allen Wold asked about the new building structure. Carol Schmitz said that this project should have been done 29 years ago - the employees shouldn't have to work in those conditions, and something needs to be done to make it safe for the employees and the public.

Marcie Conroy said that in 1989 a letter was sent out to all the citizens the Saturday before the election with mistruths and accusations, and she doesn't want that to happen again.

Chere Rikimoto commented on the air quality in the Courthouse. She said that more people didn't come to this public meeting because they are tired of hearing about it, and that the Commissioners just need to make a decision and move forward with it. The citizens see the dollar amount on the ballot but don't understand the conditions of the courthouse.

Michael Marchetti commented that we have voted on this two or three times in the past. He doesn't like the fact that there is only one option. He would like to know if we could build something cheaper if we separate the courtroom area from the other offices. He wondered that since we're the smallest county, how long will we even have a courtroom. Franzese said that his caseload has increased 50% over the past few years, we won't be getting rid of the courthouse.

K. Johnson mentioned that the Board looked at Morton Buildings as well and the numbers were similar as this estimate from Engan Associates. Leininger said that Morton Buildings was slightly less but they didn't have demolition or the temporary housing included in their quote.

Monson said that we can keep putting band aides on the issues, but sooner or later we will need to build.

Allen Wold asked if the Commissioners have looked for some outside funding. Monson said that the Traverse County Courthouse does not qualify for the historical society funding like some of the other courthouses around us.

Salberg said that these issues need to be addressed now. With the information that Springstead has given us you can look up the value of your house and or land and see what the increase will be. All three courthouse studies that have been done have recommended that we replace not remodel.

Marty Peterson asked how many years would the bond be and was told that it would be a 20 year bond. These numbers also do not reflect the energy savings or the reduced maintenance savings.

Leininger thanked the public that showed up for coming and adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Lisa Siegel, County Coordinator

Kevin Leininger, Board Chairman