

Traverse County Commission
Special Board Meeting
October 2, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Commission Vice Chairman Dave Salberg. Other Commissioners present included Tom Monson, and Todd Johnson. Kevin Leininger and Mark Gail were 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.

The Board held a special Board meeting at the school in Browns Valley to address the public with information regarding a new courthouse. 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.

We can temporarily fix the cracks but the foundation still needs to be renovated and this is very expensive. Stone foundation is not economical, it is a temporary solution and we are just delaying the replacement process. The advantage of a new building is the life expectancy.

Steve Boehmlehner asked what the life expectancy of a new building is. Engan said that we can expect to get 100 years if the moisture stays out. With remodeling we don't know how many years we will get out of it. Boehmlehner asked if we plan to demolish the 1974 addition, Engan said that we plan to demolish the existing courthouse and build a new one level building.

Vicki Powers asked what the renovation costs are compared to the new construction cost. Engan said that there was a renovation proposal back in 2013 and in today's dollars it would be approximately 2/3 of the cost of the new project. But the renovation would not fix the security issues and the flexibility issues.

Roger Schmidt asked what code issues wouldn't be grandfathered in if we renovated the courthouse. Engan said that it is hard to say, we may be able to be grandfathered in for some code issues but things like security aren't a building code issue.

Schmidt asked the Commissioners how many elected officials have quit or not filed for office because of the conditions of the courthouse. The building is in the condition that it is because the elected personnel didn't maintain it over the years. Schmidt thanked T. Johnson for making

a motion to put the courthouse project on the ballot so that the public has a chance to vote. Schmidt also asked T. Johnson what he meant when he said that unless County State Aide isn't restored the courthouse won't be financial sustainable. T. Johnson said that in the past the Commissioners could count on the County State Aide and without it our levy has to increase. However we can no longer defend the known deficiencies in the courthouse building, we have to look at the value of a dollar and do something that makes sense, and we are at a critical point with this structure.

Steve Boehmlehner asked the Commissioners if they have thought of ways to cut down on other expenses in order to pay for the new courthouse. He asked how much we could save if we tried to save and use the 1974 addition. Engan said that the new project is a one story and the 1974 addition isn't one level and then we would be dealing with accessibility issues.

Boehmlehner asked the Commissioners if the courthouse doesn't go through the vote will you go ahead and build it anyway. Salberg said he can't answer it until he sees the vote, T. Johnson will do what the vote says and Monson will wait to see what the vote is.

Salberg adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Lisa Siegel, County Coordinator

Dave Salberg, Board Vice-Chairman