

Moffat County Board of County Commissioners
221 W Victory Way Suite 130 Craig, CO 81625

October 5, 2020
Public Hearing – Courthouse Study

In attendance: Ray Beck, Chair; Don Cook, Board Member; Donald Broom, Board Member; Erin Miller, Deputy Clerk & Recorder; Roy Tipton; KC Hume; Lennie Gillam; Lori Gillam; Ray Erku; Pat Pearce; Shauana Merrill; Melody Villard; Adam Cozzens; Jeff Comstock; Brad McDermott; Ken Baptist; Glenda Bellio

6:30 pm - Public Hearing:

Office of Development Services – Roy Tipton
Courthouse Feasibility Study

Beck called the meeting to order.

Beck read a background statement on the purpose/process of the Courthouse Feasibility Study.

Beck read the Public Hearing protocol. He also mentioned that there would be one additional Public Hearing on October 13, during the BOCC meeting.

Tipton presented a PowerPoint slide show regarding the proposed new Courthouse project in the old Kmart building. He discussed the results of a feasibility study/evaluation that was done by Traenor HL. Prior to embarking on the feasibility study, installation of a single point of entry (security) was looked at for the current courthouse, at a cost of \$600,000. It was thought at the time, that it might be better to invest in a whole new building, and also bring in Department of Human Services and the Extension Office. The original Courthouse was built in 1917; renovated in 1932 and again in 1962.

Problems with current building (50,000 sq ft):

- Old jail area is not useable, even for storage
- Lacking in square footage, especially on the Court Level. Floor plan is very cut-up trying to make it useable – not good use of space
- Lacking ADA compliant facilities; not enough bathroom facilities in the entire building for level of occupancy
- No fire sprinklers or alarms
- Lack of emergency egress from Courts floor
- Cast iron pipes in the floor are rotting; will have to be replaced
- Security – public check-in; jury check-in
- No enclosed/secured delivery of in-custody prisoners
- Only one attorney/client meeting room
- DA's Office/Probation Office are overflowing
- DHS Office and Extension Office also in repurposed, older buildings that lack security and confidentiality

The Kmart building (built in 1993 – 96,000 sq. ft.) is a big, open box. Traenor had engineers and mechanical people take a look at the systems, roof and foundation; the building is in really good shape. Because it is one story, we wouldn't need an elevator.

According to the Space Needs Study, we need approximately 59,000 square feet, including all the County administrative offices, Extension Office, Veteran's Services, Public Health, County Attorney & Department of Human Services, and a 42,000 sq. ft. secured judicial section that would include three court rooms, 14th Judicial District, Probation & District Attorney offices.

One function of the Space Needs Study was to determine if we could reuse the current building. One solution was to build an addition (initially for Courts and DHS) in the back parking lot to avoid the problem of trying to rehab the building while still using it on a daily basis. If this option was used, parking would be a problem. So, most likely, the Extension Office building would have to be torn down.

The construction (estimated) cost breakdown between the two facilities:

Remodel current Courthouse - \$45,000,000

Kmart Building - \$25, 281,000 (including 11 acres)

The sale price of the Kmart building is \$2.25 million; the estimated construction cost budget is \$20 million. The proposed way to pay for this project would be to use the Certificates of Participation bonds that currently are being used for the Public Safety Center. Those bonds are due to be retired in 2023 and 2025; they could be refinanced to cover construction costs for the new Courthouse project. The building could be purchased with the Anvil Points monies, plus mineral monies that are currently allocated to the Fairgrounds and Senior Housing, a portion of which could be reallocated to this project.

Glenda Bellio asked several questions:

- Wondered what the anticipated value and/or sale potential of the DHS building and Extension Office would be?
- Will we most likely have to pay to tear down the old Courthouse since it is not really a saleable property?

Tipton stated that he felt the DHS building on Breeze Street is a very saleable building, but all of those things are very hard to predict.

- Even though the sales tax is bringing in a \$1 million right now, what will happen when the mines and the power plant are gone?

If the sales tax is not at the level where we need it to be, the County would have to make that up.

- Were any other buildings in the community looked at, like the Mall?

Tipton explained that the Mall would take a lot more money to renovate and the Safeway building is not big enough.

- What is the projected annual cost (upkeep) of the Kmart building and what would be the cost of maintaining the old buildings until they do sell?
- Wondered if the cost of tearing down the Extension Office down for parking was included in the figures if the addition was built on the back of the existing Courthouse?

Tipton said he would have to double check his figures for those answers.

Pat Pearce:

- Still needed some explanation of the space breakdowns and wondered if the Kmart building was actually big enough and asked if there would be enough space to add on in 5-10 years if we needed more?

Tipton explained the space necessities and emphasized that because the Kmart building sits on 11 acres, there would be plenty of room to expand.

Commissioner Cook explained that the judicial branch can order the County to build a new facility, and by looking at it now, we will be saving a lot of money.

Beck opened the floor to public testimony in favor of the project.

Lennie Gillam (head of Moffat County Facility Maintenance/Business Owner): Strongly in favor of this project, as he sees this building from the inside out every day for the last 15 years and knows what bad shape it's in. Because he is a business owner, he did not want any new taxes. Proud of the BOCC for thinking outside the box and trying to get ahead of the curve. We have done what we can with this building, but it's time to move on.

Ken Baptist (Sheriff's Deputy): Thanked the BOCC for looking at this project. Baptist works for the Moffat County Sheriff's Office as part time court security and part time jail duty. Every day, working here, you play the "what if" game in relation to the potential of fire, an active shooter, gas leak, etc. There would be no way that he could get on the phone and alert everyone in the building about the problem. Encouraged the BOCC to look at security, no matter what solution they come up with.

Brad McDermott (Sheriff's Deputy): Works for the Moffat County Sheriff's Office for 16 years, has done inmate transport and now is the Court Security officer. Encouraged the BOCC to move forward with the project.

Pat Pearce: Said she understands the inadequacies of this building, but is concerned about what will happen to the old courthouse.

Beck called for any public testimony in opposition of the project.

Glenda Bellio: Stated at this time, she was neither for nor against the project, but feels like more realistic projections need to be made available in relation to the existing buildings, and potential sales tax revenues. She agrees that something needs to be done, but more real numbers need to be made available.

Hearing closed

The floor was opened up for any questions or comments.

Lennie Gillam: Said he understands that it's hard to go out on a limb on something like this, but you never know what's out there. He gave the example of the Shadow Mountain Clubhouse. The BOCC caught a lot of heat for selling the building; a private owner came in, bought the building, remodeled it, and turned it into a very nice facility that is back on the tax rolls. He feels the DHS building and Extension Office are prime buildings for sale.

Don Cook: He agreed with Bellio about concerns about what will be happening in 10 years, but it is a foregone conclusion that we will have to come up with a new Courthouse building. If we don't get the Kmart building now, we sure won't be able to afford a new building in the future.

Glenda Bellio: Agreed that we probably do need to do something, but we have to be realistic; in actuality, it's probably more like two years that our tax base will start to deplete. Just would like to see real numbers in place for information.

Ray Beck: Spoke about potential upcoming projects that could add to our local tax base.

Don Cook: Commented that he doesn't feel as pessimistic about the sales tax levels. Thinks we will have more people moving here because of lower housing prices, etc.

Meeting adjourned at 7:26 pm

Submitted by:

Erin Miller, Deputy Clerk and Recorder

Approved by:

Ray Beck

Don Cook

Conrad Brown

Approved on:

October 27, 2020

Attest by:

Erin Miller

