

WILL COUNTY BOARD
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES

January 4, 2011
302 North Chicago Street
County Board Committee Room
Joliet IL 60432

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Maher called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present were Members: Dralle, Brooks, B. Smith, L. Smith, Traynere, Winfrey and Maher

Absent were Members: None

Also Present: County Board Chairman Jim Moustis, Majority Leader Jim Bilotta and Will County Chief Judge Gerald Kinney

Present from State's Attorney's Office: ASA Mary Tatroe and ASA Melanie Manning

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Brooks led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mrs. Dralle, second by Ms. Winfrey, to approve the minutes of October 5, 2010. All in favor. MOTION CARRIES.

OLD BUSINESS

Update from Wight & Company

Mr. Maher explained that there have been several meetings on the Will County Master Plan created by Wight & Company, and today's session would simply be an over view.

Mr. Dwyer explained that Wight & Company began the planning process by meeting with the different departments to talk about their priorities and consider information from the space needs analysis. A smaller planning leadership group then worked on the concepts. At this point, the planning concepts are about 75 percent along, and the next step will be a budget analysis to identify the projected costs of the projects. Then the projects will be prioritized.

Mr. Dwyer stated that one aspect of the planning process involved deciding how to organize the different county facilities. He suggested grouping them into three main components: the functions in downtown Joliet, including the County Office Building, the courthouse and related offices; facilities dealing with a core function such as the Highway Department, the River Valley Justice Center and the Sheriff's Law Enforcement Facility, among others; and satellite facilities that have several functions and are oriented toward service.

Mr. Dwyer advised that the satellite locations should be located in the northern and eastern sections of the county. The county probably will have to buy property for these proposed buildings.

Mr. Dwyer stated he would now discuss buildings other than the ones devoted to the court system. Some county functions should be relocated to the County Office Building to consolidate functions and make it easier for the public to access services. It might be best to acquire the missing corner parcel at North Chicago Street and Jackson Street. If some county offices are relocated to the County Office Building, more parking would be needed – perhaps a parking deck could be built along the railroad tracks on the east side of Scott Street and just north of Benton Street.

Mr. Dwyer proposed that the administrative and engineering components of the Highway Department might be moved to the County Office Building to make it easier for those employees to work with the Land Use Department. Workforce Development and Veterans Assistance should remain in their current locations but perhaps some of their services should be offered at the satellite sites.

Mr. Dwyer noted that the existing County Office Building is about 93,000 square feet with about 198 employees. If other county offices were relocated in the office building, the staff might increase to 324 employees, so the square footage might be increased to 175,000 square feet.

Mr. Dwyer stated that there are different ways to expand the County Office Building. Each possibility included the acquisition of the corner parcel at North Chicago Street and Jackson Street. A two-story addition could be built on the west side of the building, perhaps with a basement. Then the existing building would need renovations which could be costly and challenging. Or a new building could be constructed on the existing parking lot. Once that was built, the existing County Office Building could be demolished, and the land could be turned into a parking lot.

Mr. Dwyer explained there was a third option that didn't seem practical: building a new structure and keeping the existing building, perhaps to lease to some other entity with a compatible use.

Mr. Dwyer stated the proposed plans for the Health Department's main campus on Ella Avenue did not include the Community Health Center. The number of staff might range from 310 to 377, depending on the available funding over the long term. The existing Health Department building is deteriorating and there also is some water damage, among other problems. Instead of planning renovations, it would be better to build a new structure and demolish the existing building.

Mr. Dwyer noted that Sunny Hill Nursing Home is being renovated and doesn't need to be expanded.

Mr. Dwyer proposed a plan that included a new four-story Health Department facility. Once it was built, the existing building could be demolished and more parking could be added to the overall site. The second concept was a pod-style structure. Then more space could be added if needed in the future. Perhaps a small park or green space could be added after the existing Health Department building was razed.

Mr. Dwyer indicated that the Highway Department's buildings on Laraway Road are in good shape and should remain there. But the Sheriff's buildings at the same location have some real challenges: the buildings are old, deteriorating and the space isn't really suited for a modern law enforcement facility. The Sheriff's downtown Joliet facility known as the Eagle Building has similar problems and probably should be eliminated. The Sheriff's functions should be consolidated. The location for a consolidated building hasn't been identified, but it might work on Laraway Road if sewer and water could be brought to the site.

Mr. Dwyer suggested that Animal Control or household hazardous waste might be moved to the Laraway Road site.

Mr. Dwyer also indicated that if the Sheriff consolidated the office side of his operation in one building, functions such as vehicle maintenance, evidence storage and vehicle impound might be housed at the Laraway Road site.

Mr. Dwyer stated that the judicial facilities including the main courthouse, the support functions and the jail should remain in Joliet. There should be courtrooms in the satellite buildings: one courtroom in the eastern site, particularly for traffic court, and as many as four in the northern site. Traffic cases and civil cases such as probate could be heard at the northern site, and some Probation officers also might be moved there.

Mr. Dwyer suggested that a new courthouse could be built on the site of the current First Midwest Bank building at Ottawa Street and Jefferson Street in Joliet. Under that scenario, Washington Street might be vacated between Ottawa Street and Joliet Street, and that space could be used for a courthouse parking deck. Property near Ottawa Street and between DeKalb Street and Marion Street also might be acquired for more parking and a future expansion of the jail.

Mr. Dwyer stated that there were two concepts for a new courthouse. Under the first one, the existing courthouse and the EMCO Building would be expanded and renovated. The courtrooms, judges' chambers and central holding would be moved to a new building on the First Midwest Bank site. The basement of the current courthouse would be used to store files and the first floor would be an expanded office space for the Circuit Clerk. The State's Attorney's Offices also would be moved back to the third and fourth floors of the existing courthouse. The Public Defender's Office and Probation might move to the EMCO Building. A second-floor bridge or walkway would be built between the existing courthouse and the new building proposed for the First Midwest Bank property.

Mr. Dwyer indicated that the new courthouse building would have three zones. One would be public, one would house the courtrooms, and the third would be reserved for back offices and the judges' chambers. There would be a central holding area on the first floor and a secure elevator to transport inmates and prisoners to another holding area near the courtrooms. The new building would be 10 stories.

Mr. Dwyer suggested that central holding for people in custody would be along Washington Street.

Mr. Dwyer stated there would be a much larger area inside the courthouse for the public to form a line before walking through security. There also would be a larger space for jurors to assemble. The space for jurors could also be used for other functions such as training. The second floor would be oriented toward customer service and would house the law library, a self-help legal center and a cafeteria or lounge space. The third floor would have larger courtrooms, a holding area for people in custody and a private area for supportive services and judges' chambers.

Mr. Dwyer indicated that the fourth through eighth floors would be for criminal court rooms. The ninth and tenth floors would be for civil courtrooms.

Mr. Maher mentioned that there had been some discussion about devoting a floor of the building to the judges' chambers. Some of that space might be used for mediation sessions.

Mr. Dwyer stated that there was a second courthouse concept that was very similar to the first one so he decided not to discuss it.

Mr. Dwyer indicated there also was discussion about building a courthouse that would accommodate all the supportive offices, meaning that the county might not use the EMCO building or the existing courthouse for court-related functions. It would be a large building on one block between Joliet Street, Ottawa Street and Washington Street. Under that concept, Washington Street might be vacated. Although it has cost implications, a building could be constructed to house the primary court facilities, and in five to 15 years, an agency office building addition could be constructed.

Mr. Dwyer said the next few steps in the overall process included planning the satellite facilities, the Sheriff's Law Enforcement center, Animal Control, 9-1-1 and emergency operations. Then a budget could be developed and the work could be prioritized.

Ms. Smith asked where the Sheriff's civil functions would be.

Mr. Dwyer replied that it would be in the main courthouse.

Ms. Smith asked if the building would have escalators.

Mr. Dwyer replied that an escalator or perhaps stairs would be logical for some of the lower floors.

Mr. Maher asked to have the first item under new business be brought forward on the agenda.

Ms. Winfrey left the meeting at this juncture.

Location Breakdown of Constituents Utilizing County Court System

Judge Kinney stated that the current courthouse was built when the county's population was about 200,000. At the last Census, it was 502,000. The 2010 Census seems to indicate that the population is now 685,000. In 2010, 670,000 people came into the courthouse, and 864,000 people came into the courthouse, the EMCO Building and the River Valley Justice Center.

Judge Kinney stated that 38.8 percent of the courts' volume comes from the northern part of the county: Bolingbrook, Romeoville, Lockport, Naperville, Homer Glen and Plainfield. If a satellite courthouse was built to the north, a significant number of cases could be moved to that building.

Mr. Bilotta asked what percentage of the county's total population lived in those towns – would the number be about 38 percent?

Judge Kinney replied he thought that was true, and added that the City of Joliet alone is 31 percent of the courts' volume.

Mr. Maher asked for a breakdown of the types of cases included in the statistics.

Judge Kinney replied he would provide that information at a later date.

Mr. Maher asked for an estimation of the size of the proposed northern satellite facility, considering the cases that could be heard there. Would it be a large building?

Judge Kinney stated that he did not know precisely, but if just the traffic cases were heard there, it would incrementally reduce the number of people coming to the downtown Joliet area for court.

Mr. Moustis asked how many courtrooms might be included in the northern satellite facility.

Judge Kinney replied that Wight & Company had four courtrooms in their proposal – but there definitely were enough cases to keep two courtrooms busy.

Mr. Moustis asked if four would be a good number of courtrooms.

Judge Kinney replied that it was. Some civil cases could be heard there too. A satellite courthouse in the northern part of the county isn't political – it's logical because of the number of people who live in that area.

Mrs. Dralle asked if population projections and the breakdown of traffic and civil cases were considered during the process of planning for a satellite courthouse in the northern part of the county.

Mr. Maher replied that this was the first time there has been an analysis of court cases by geographic location.

Mr. Moustis asked about the size of the four courtrooms.

Mr. Dwyer replied that they would be at least 1,600 square feet, although traffic courtrooms often are 2,400 to 2,500 square feet.

Mr. Moustis asked how much support space would be needed.

Mr. Dwyer answered that it would vary by courtroom. Wight & Company is planning a satellite courthouse in Kane County, and that multi-use facility will be 20,000 square feet.

Judge Kinney indicated that the planning process included population projections until 2030.

Mr. Moustis noted that utilizing the court buildings in downtown Joliet was really a way of phasing into a final court building -- or buildings -- that would be on the same site. The EMCO Building was built in 1890, and the current courthouse opened in 1968 or 1969. Both buildings are

older and might need extensive and costly rehabbing. The ultimate goal is to be in one building or on a court campus.

Mr. Dwyer stated that when considering a new court facility, the potential peak population in 2030 or 2035 was used.

Mr. Dwyer stated that the actual number was 1.2 million, and it was based on population projections to 2040. Because the site is in downtown Joliet, there is only so much room to expand. The facility should not be under planned.

Mr. Maher asked if the members of the committee would like copies of the information from Wight & Company and Judge Kinney. After time for consideration, there could be another meeting for detailed questions on each phase of the proposed plan.

Mr. Dwyer stated that he would distribute copies of his PowerPoint presentation.

LED Technology and Lighting Update

Mr. Rafac stated that there were two lighting options being considered for the County Office Building: new lighting for the parking lot and additional lights for the board room. The county would have to pay for the installation of the lights in the parking lot, and because the lights were changed not long ago, perhaps that should be postponed for awhile. The pricing of both options would be considered, and perhaps the work could be done internally.

Mr. Rafac stated that the price of replacing all the T8 bulbs also would be considered and bids would be sought for that work.

Mr. Maher asked for a timeline.

Mr. Rafac stated that he didn't have all the necessary information to form one.

Mrs. Traynere noted that the committee didn't know the future configuration of the parking lot and asked how long it might be before new lights would pay for themselves.

Mr. Rafac replied that the calculation had yet to be done, but the change would be likely to reduce the watt usage by 75 percent.

Mr. Maher said it would be awhile before either job was done, but the important factor to consider about the parking lot is the amount of energy savings.

OLD BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN

EXECUTIVE SESSION

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Smith, second by Ms. Smith, to adjourn the meeting at 11:33 a.m.
All in favor.

MOTION CARRIES.