

Jail, fairgrounds projects discussed

Written by George Browning
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The Washington County Commissioners held their first meeting of the new year.

The major topic of discussion was the proposed jail expansion project.

Joseph Mrak with RQAW Corporation gave an update on the jail project.

Mrak was to meet with Washington County Sheriff Claude Combs to go over the plans and specifications.

Mrak said his company is planning on finishing the design around the end of January and then will get into a quality control review before putting the plans up for bid.

"We haven't set a date for that yet," he said. "Having the review with the Sheriff is a key element in completing the design."

Mrak explained the project which is designed in phases.

The new housing pod is the base bid and then there a number of alternates.

"We're getting a separate price for each of these pieces so you can determine the value of each piece and then make a decision," he said. "The housing pod and new kitchen and laundry is base bid and there is no question that will get done."

The alternate number one would be the construction of the new lobby, which would incorporate the video visitation and building out the shell – the walls and the roof-- of the new court room.

Alternate number two would be to go ahead and build out the new court room, all the finishes and benches and some minor renovations will occur in the existing building.

Alternate three would build the shell to the new sheriff's office and Alternate four would include building out the interior of the new Sheriff's office.

"Once the new court is done, the sheriff's office will move to what used to be Superior Court," Mrak said.

Alternates five, six and seven are existing renovations of the existing jail, he said.

Mrak encouraged the county to issue a Statement Of Qualifications or energy savings performance contractors to submit their qualifications to the county.

"We think all of the renovations would qualify for an energy savings project and we could possibly get an amount of money you don't have to bond for," he said. "The cost of the project would be paid for through energy savings."

Mrak said issuing the statement of qualifications does not bind the county.

"The county would solicit this SOQ and receive qualifications back and from that the county would select from that one of these performance contractors to give you a detailed proposal for what the energy savings will be," he said. "Then the county can consider if it's something they want to do."

"None of this do you incur any cost. I think it's a benefit and gives us options and also gives us all the information we need to make a fully informed decision."

The commissioners unanimously approved the issuing of the SOQ.

There is a public hearing to discuss the jail expansion project on Jan. 22 at 10 am.

In other business

The commissioners had a lengthy discussion with Cecilia Peredo, who is Community Development Specialist with River Hills EDD & RPC.

The discussion was about the possibility of the county acquiring a grant to complete a new building at the Washington County Fairgrounds.

The county could receive a \$400,000 grant, but the estimate for the project at the fairgrounds is estimated to cost more than \$1 million.

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Commissioner David Brown said getting the grant would be nice, but in the current financial situation there isn't enough money to come up with the additional funds that are needed.

The commissioners are under a time restraint if they want to apply for the Community Focus Fund Grant.

"The Proposal is due in mid-March and the applications is due at the end of May," Peredo said. "At this point we are behind. To do the proposal there is quite a bit of work that needs to be done."

Peredo said another option the county has is to do a project with a sub-recipient.

"The current sub-recipient is the Blue River Fire District fire station," she said. "There is a potential sub-recipient that I am aware of who was not ready to officially make a request to the county, but is very interested."

The commissioners decided to set up a meeting with Peredo and the potential groups who might benefit from the fairgrounds project.

Commissioner John D. Fultz was selected to be president of the Commissioners in 2013.

Commissioner Phillip Marshall was selected to be vice president.

The commissioner's next meeting will be Jan. 22 at 9 a.m. at the Washington County Government Building.