



New Courthouse News from Bob Schlaeger:

Bob is sure that everyone has noticed that the red iron is standing and the construction is beginning to look like a real building. When the ironworkers return on the 21st of February, the remaining columns and beams will be erected. Some of you might have noticed that there are lights on in the basement. Bob says that isn't all that is going on down there. The entire underground pipe for the sump basket is installed. McHan's men are grading "P" rock in the basement getting ready for the concrete floors. The electricians and plumbers will be laying their pipe underground as well. There is a

million BTU furnace in the basement thawing out the ground so that work can continue. The new timeline was published by McHan last week pushing the phase I construction completion date and the County phase I move-in date out to December 23, 2005. It also shows the Courthouse demolition taking 30 days and ending February 3, 2006. Projected completion of Phase II is now listed on the timetable as November 20, 2006. McHan says the delays are a result of backordered materials and the lack of qualified construction personnel in the area. Bob says he will continue to push McHan to get back on schedule.

County Attorney: The following is an update of the County Attorney's case statistics. At the beginning of 2004, the County Attorney's office reported 308 pending indictable files. As of December 31, 2004, the office reports only 226 pending indictable files. According to the Dickinson County Clerk of Court, the County Attorney filed 585 indictable cases in 2004 and closed 646 indictable cases. The clerk shows that the number of pending indictable cases is down by 61 cases compared to January of 2004. There were 680 open indictable cases at the beginning of 2004 and now there are only 619. The County Attorney is happy to report the office is making progress. It is important to note that the clerk's numbers reflect cases that have warrants. The files the County Attorney counts are the active files that are currently being worked on, not those waiting in a file cabinet with warrants. The discrepancy in numbers being reported is related to the methodology of tabulating the various types of cases. Whatever method is used in counting the cases, the County Attorney says her office is moving in the right direction.

Supervisors' Activities:

Union negotiations: Last month it was reported that the County and the Secondary Roads department's union ratified a 3-year agreement. On January 25, 2005, the Supervisors, the Sheriff and the Sheriff department's union met with a mediator to negotiate the Sheriff's union contract. After hours of negotiations, the union and the County came to a 3-year agreement. Ratification will take place as soon as the written agreement is received by both parties. The County will then have a 3-year agreement with both unions.

Budget: All County Departments have been participating in the County budgeting process. In January each County Department submitted their department's expense and revenue budgets to the Auditor. Those numbers were combined into worksheets for the Board of Supervisors to review. The first pass results for the General Fund were as follows: Ending FY05 balance equaling 1.6 million or 32%. FY06 revenues equaling \$4.6 million. FY06 expenses equaling \$5.6 million. Ending FY06 balance equaling \$618,737 or 11%. As everyone knows, an 11% ending balance is NOT acceptable. The BOS has been working with each department to reduce expenditures with the intent of ending up with a 25% to 30% ending balance. After several meetings, the BOS is now anticipating an increase of the General Fund levy by at least 20 cents and the Rural Basic levy by at least 9 cents. This will not be a popular decision. It is important to understand that none of this is a result of the new courthouse or the purchase of furniture, etc. for the new courthouse, as those monies are set aside in their own funds. This is a result of the re-forecast numbers for this year and the anticipated expenses for FY06. The BOS must have all budget decisions made on or before February 22nd in order to be able to certify on March 15th.

Tech hiring Committee: The Tech hiring Committee has placed an ad in several newspapers and in several on-line newspaper, magazine and organizational Internet sites. The Committee reports that they have received over 30 requests for interviews.

New Phone system committee: The phone committee has turned the RFP over to the Board of Supervisors for their review. The committee is looking for approval from the BOS on March 1, 2005, with a public hearing and adoption of the plan on March 22nd. If everything follows the schedule, the notice to bidders will go in the newspaper on April 12th, receipt of bids on May 24th and the contract will be awarded on June 14th. Information has been gathered from the Departments and the State to help in the calculation of the estimate for the cost of the new phone system. The estimate at this time is approximately \$155,000.

New Furniture for the Courthouse: As was reported in last month's newsletter, almost a year ago, the first new furniture cost report for the new Courthouse was an estimated cost of \$917,346.25 and the budget was \$400,000. After two days of meetings on February 1st and 2nd with all of the County Departments, the State and two representatives from RDG, the total furniture budget is now \$444,675. Congratulations to everyone for doing such a great job in identifying those unnecessary furniture expenditures! By removing those items, it has made it possible for Supervisors to work the furniture budget into the overall new courthouse budget. The breakout of the \$444,675 is \$360,354.75 County, \$19,477.50 Assessor, \$5,460.00 EMA and \$59,382.75 for the State.

Document Retention and Transition Committee: The retention committee has been looking at the transition plans for those departments that will not be in their permanent space during phase I. It was recommended that since the Auditor will have to move twice regardless and was originally planned to be in the Assessor's space in the new building, that maybe the Assessor should move into her new space in phase I instead of phase II. After discussion with the Auditor and the Assessor, it has been decided to move the Assessor into her permanent space in phase I and move the Auditor into the Assessor's office across the street until the completion of phase II. The committee also hired RDG to help in the transition plans. Beth Will met with RDG while they were here to discuss the furniture. The committee is expecting to receive transition floor plans for phase I from RDG, outlines and worksheets to help with transitions and a generic RFP for hiring a moving company.

Other Departmental News will be included in Newsletters to come.