

Temporary Housing Costs For Renovation Plan Could Be Better Spent

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Fellow County Residents

I am a member of the Courthouse Committee, and have attended every meeting held on the courthouse including the one held at the Care building by the Committee to Save the Courthouse. I have listened to building experts, state and local historical preservationists, other officials and fellow county citizens for over a year. I have taken this task seriously and have tried to inform others as facts became known.

I sincerely hope a viable plan can be presented to the Commissioners to save the courthouse. These feelings, however, do not override my reasoning to request the Commissioners to place the ballot before the voters to build a new courthouse. The risk to the safety and security of county employees and citizens is just too great to allow the current building to continue to function as our Circuit Courtroom and county offices.

The approximate \$200,000 needed to move county government from the courthouse for renovation would serve the county better if applied to a new building. The length of time county government would be disrupted, not to mention the task of obtaining temporary housing somewhere in the county has to be taken into consideration. The courthouse is on the register of historical places and that will be a determining factor in the cost of renovation, if this is the option the citizens finally choose. Asbestos and lead paint in the courthouse will further drive up costs for renovation. The Courthouse Committee received an estimate for renovation plus an addition because the courtroom could not be in the existing courthouse. The price of renovation plus addition was \$800,000 over the \$4 million the county can bond. Plus, renovation usually costs more than the initial estimates, because of unforeseen problems after the project starts. How long will a renovation last before we have to go through the same process again?

These are just some of the questions I faced making my decision. The Courthouse Committee has provided a pamphlet "A New Courthouse? Questions and answers for your consideration", to inform the voters. I have been convinced of the need for a new courthouse and plan to vote "Yes" on November 3, 2009. Hope to see you there.

Charles "Chuck" Braxton, Courthouse Committee member

October 23, 2009