

Building Committee Meeting: Minutes
Thursday, June 17, 2021 6:00 pm at the courthouse

Members present:

Steve Whittaker	David Nollner	Bubba Gregory
John Oliver	Richard Johnson	Mayor Stephen Chambers
Dwight Jewell	Richard Harsh	Cty Attorney, Branden Bellar
Beverly Atwood	Shane Burton	

Not Present: Amber Russell, Ken Buckmaster

Chairman Harsh called the meeting to order.

Roll call. Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Old business:

-Mayor Chambers addressed courthouse renovations. While there is money available for some of the needed energy improvements, the mayor is having trouble getting a qualified person or firm to do an assessment of the needs and determine what would be appropriate for an historic property.

-Mayor has received one estimate for a complete replacement of the existing heating and air conditioning system. The estimate was \$698,000. One bid to replace the old windows with newer energy efficient ones was \$130,000. However, most historic restoration people do not suggest replacing original windows.

-The mayor then addressed the work being done on the room tentatively set aside for the Election office. Pulling up the old floor tile exposed some rotten flooring due to a leaky heater. He plans to put down new hardwood floors to match the floors put in the hallway of the building after the recent water damage there. Some insurance money from that damage is left over and can be used to help with the cost of the new floor.

-The mayor has received suggestions regarding lighting improvements and efficiency. The use of LED lights and new fixtures was recommended.

The next issue was the possibility of moving the Election office to the courthouse. The office currently shares a building with the County Extension office. The move has been brought up in the past and discussed.

-The mayor told the committee that he can manage county offices, but he does not have the power to move an office from one building to another.

That responsibility belongs to the County Commission.

-The mayor addressed some problems that the Election commission has raised with the proposed move. They were not in favor of the move. The County Extension office is getting another agent and need office space for them. They are already in cramped space and would like to have use of the entire building. The county is required to provide them with office space.

-The Election commissioners were concerned about internet access and were informed that the courthouse does have connections and can be updated as needed.

-Concerns about handicapped access were also addressed. The mayor has had the current ramp, doors, hallways, etc. looked at and they were deemed adequate.

-A suggestion by the Election to put the new Extension office in the basement of the building was countered by the sheriff, who currently uses the basement for storage. He would have to move and there is no place available for him to move to.

-The chairman of the Election commission, Sherri Baxley, spoke. She stated that the commission was happy with their present location and did not think the courthouse would serve them as well.

-Extension agent, Jason Evitts, spoke to the committee. He said that there were problems with parking in front of the building when early voting took place. He also addressed the need for more space besides just one more office.

-A few committee members spoke, mentioning inadequate parking during early voting and the advantage of having the Election office at the courthouse due to its central location, better parking and the need for the county to keep the courthouse open on a daily basis. The Election office also needs more space as they are getting an assistant to the election official.

Motion by Oliver to recommend to the full Commission that they approve the move of the Election office to the courthouse. Second by Gregory. Passed unanimously.

-The mayor then spoke on sidewalk improvements. A request to have TDOT place sidewalks between downtown Hartsville and Highway 25 had been turned down for this year's DOT budget, but we will apply again for next year's cycle of projects. The Urban Services District has money in its budget for sidewalk improvements. They will be spending 40,000 dollars to replace and improve sidewalks, particularly in the old downtown area.

-The Water Department has purchased land behind the County Administration building and want to consolidate all of their materials, equipment and trucks in one location. An architect has drawn up plans for a new building there. The building would be paid for by the Water Department, but the County Commission has to ok the project. Plans would include widening the entrance to the County Administration property from Broadway.

Motion to recommend to the full Commission that they give approval for the Water Department to begin construction on the lot they purchased. Second by Nollner. Passed. One no vote.

-Sheriff Russell then spoke on erosion problems behind the county jail on Main Street. Adding large rocks and dirt has been done in the past, but eventually it always washes away from heavy rains and the creek rising. Presently, he can't let his prisoners use the fenced in exercise area because of the erosion. He plans to add some concrete work to the repair job. The sheriff does need approval from TDEC. He does not need approval from the Corps of Engineers. He will arrange to get the appropriate approvals and does not need commission action on this matter. He wanted the committee to be aware of the problem.

-The mayor then advised the committee on the need for more county phones due to added employees and offices. That will require him to expand the current phone contract. There was no need for committee action.

-A question was raised about the sale of properties that were taken over by the county due to back taxes. These have been held by the county for a year and we can now sell them at public auction. The mayor said that a sale should take place this summer.

Meeting adjourned.

John Oliver, Secretary