

**CLAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE, JAIL, & LAW ENFORCEMENT FACILITY
PLANNING COMMITTEE**
Summary Report, December, 2020

When did this project begin?

In 2018 the Clay County Commissioners received reports from Klein McCarthy Architects and TLM Correctional Consultants that the Clay County Courthouse, the County Jail, and the Joint Law Enforcement facilities were no longer meeting the current needs of the community, nor the facility staff, as well as being inadequate to meet future needs. The same studies concluded that the jail and the joint law enforcement center must be replaced with a modern functional facility that will meet contemporary jail standards and legal guidelines.

In November 2019, the county commissioners appointed a citizens planning committee to review the McCarthy and TLM reports and make a recommendation regarding the future of the facility.

The members of the facility planning committee

The committee includes seven voting members - Robert Fuller, Marty Gilbertson, Greg Huckabee, Meghan McCaulry, John Walker, Steve Waller, and Nate Welch plus several non-voting ad hoc members including Sheriff Andy Howe, Chief of Police Matt Betzen, Auditor Carri Crum, and States Attorney Alexis Tracy.

Significant committee activities

The facility planning committee has conducted 87 events (to date) that include its own committee meetings, public presentations, visits to tour courthouses and jails in area communities, and the committee chair meeting with the Clay County Commissioners.

Because of the pandemic the committee chose not to hold public meetings regarding their work during the summer and fall of 2020 - they will be held as soon as possible - and the bond election has been postponed until the spring of 2021.

Architect and Construction Management At Risk Selection

The facility planning committee issued a Request For Proposals (RFP) to solicit bids from architectural firms and Construction Management At Risk (CMAR) companies interested in working on the project. It received 23 proposals that were reviewed and discussed.

The committee conducted personal interviews with four architectural firms and three CMAR firms. It recommended the hiring of JLG/BWBR Architects and the Beckenhauer Construction Company to be the CMAR firm to the county commissioners which they approved. The county commissioners also contracted the services of consultant to assist with managing the project.

What did the facility committee recommend?

The McCarthy report outlined 4 options for the Clay County courthouse, jail, and law enforcement center. Very briefly they include:

1. expanding and remodeling the courthouse and public safety center at its current location;
2. relocate the jail and the law enforcement agencies to another site and remodel and expand the courthouse and public safety center;

3. vacate the courthouse, jail and public safety facility - relocate all the government services to another site and then raze the courthouse to reuse the site for future needs or sell the building for other development:
4. relocate the jail, law enforcement agencies, courts and court support and remodel the courthouse and public safety center.

With a very important exception the facility planning committee chose to recommend a part of the 3rd option to the county commissioners It did recommend a new building to house all governmental services, jail, and law enforcement center. However, the committee would not raze the current courthouse but would rather redirect the building to other uses.

Additional Information

The original courthouse was built in 1912. Law enforcement and jail functions were expanded with an addition to the courthouse in 1989. The current jail has 20 beds for inmates and the facility would require extensive renovation and would need to be expanded to meet current and future needs.

The minimum required improvements to the courthouse building include:

- increased employee workspace;
- new heating, cooling, and ventilation systems;
- new and expanded electrical and telephone systems;
- new technological service;
- new and expanded plumbing;
- new roof;
- new windows;
- new elevator;
- foundation waterproofing;
- new ADA handicap accessible restrooms;
- courtroom improvements;
- new jury box;
- new code required safe zones;
- modifications to emergency exits;
- exterior stone repair;
- and other improvements to meet the general and specific needs of the county.

The TLM report states the following regarding the Clay County Jail: *"The projections for jail admissions is anticipated to increase continually and is estimated to reach numbers between 1000 and 1200 annually between now and the year 2035."* (Page 5 TLM Report). Additionally, within each gender category there are 27 subcategories based upon the classification policy (charge, risk level, vulnerabilities, age, and institutional behavior - (Page 16 TLM Report).

The McCarthy and TLM Corrections reports have determined the current jail is severely substandard and undersized. Even with extensive renovation the jail would not meet minimum jail standards or basic legal jail guidelines.

The facility must be replaced or closed. The TLM report states the jail is *"unable to be renovated or expanded in a way that addresses all current deficiencies."* (Page 7 TLM Report)

The alternative to new jail construction is to transport inmates to other county jails, some over 75 miles away and in neighboring states. The Clay County annual cost for housing inmates in other facilities are estimated at over \$700,000 (in today's dollars). Jails in the area generally charge between \$70 and \$100 per day housing costs per inmate.

It has been stated that a neighboring county would be happy to have Clay County pay for the expansion of their jail through the revenue generated by fees Clay County would pay for inmate boarding at their jail. This cost estimate does not include the expense of officers and vehicles on the road and the loss of safety protection services within Clay County as a result.

Closing the Clay County Jail will not provide cost savings; it will increase to approximately \$1.2 million annually within 2 to 5 years of jail closure. In addition, the law enforcement center does not meet the minimum standards for law enforcement for Clay County and the City of Vermillion. A facility designed for today and for future needs will provide safety and greater service for personnel and clients..

Possible Locations

The planning committee initially identified seven possible locations if a new facility were to be built. After considerable discussions and site visits the committee narrowed the list to three possible sites. While no final decision has been made regarding a future building location it is possible additional sites could be identified depending on numerous factors.

Two important elements of any future building site are its accessibility to the general public, especially to those people that require special accommodations, and room for future expansion.

2021 Planned Activities

While the COVID-19 Pandemic caused a pause in the committee's planned activities work has progressed. A survey of Clay County residents was prepared by the Government Research Bureau at the University of South Dakota and will be made available to the public very soon. Videos of the condition of the facilities are being planned as well.

The pandemic pause also caused a temporary postponement of public hearings and the bond election that was originally scheduled for the November general election. The county commissioners have proposed to hold the bond election in the spring of 2021 at a date yet to be determined. Public hearings planned for this project will be conducted prior to the bond election date.