

**STILLWATER COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS MINUTES**

**PUBLIC HEARING
COURTHOUSE FACILITIES OFFICE SPACE PROJECT
MAY 5, 2015 - 6:30 PM
STILLWATER COUNTY PAVILION, COLUMBUS, MONTANA**

Notice: These minutes reflect the proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners. The official minutes were approved and are filed with the Clerk and Recorder (MCA 7-4-2611(2)(b)) in their entirety, with the complete current month ending, along with resolutions and other supporting documents.

Pursuant to notice, a public hearing was held on May 5, 2015. This public hearing was recorded and transcribed by Big Sky Reporting. A full transcript of the hearing is on file in the Clerk and Recorders Office under Document No. 362196 with a total of 68 pages.

Present: Commissioners Dennis Shupak, Chair; Maureen Davey and Gerald W. Dell, Members; Lori Dobitz, Administrative Assistant; and Marilyn Niezwaag, Big Sky Reporting. Approximately 55 persons were in attendance at the hearing:

Outline of Public Hearing:

Commissioner Shupak opened the hearing, made introductions and welcomed those present. He stated the purpose for the hearing is accept comments from proponents and opponents regarding five (5) options with 4 alternates identified by the planning process for providing additional county office space for county services. The options range from remodeling existing county facilities to construction of a complete new county complex on a new site. Handouts were made available of the five (5) options and alternates along poster board drawings supplied by Spectrum Architects.

Summarized Background Information - Commissioner Dell read the following:

January 2011 - The Commissioners were approached by the Stillwater Community Hospital to start the process of building a new hospital and what the county's role would be. The Community Hospital building was being leased from the county for \$1 per year.

July 2011 - The Commissioners held a public hearing at City Hall that was attended by approximately 55 people. The purpose of that hearing was for the possible sale of the county-owned assisted living facility at the request of the Stillwater Hospital Association. We solicited public comment to determine whether it was in the best interest of the county to create a two-unit condominium of the existing hospital property and to release the Stillwater Community Hospital from its continuing obligation to pay off the 1999 series bonds. The community support was overwhelming and the opportunity came to build a new hospital in Stillwater County.

May 2012 - The new hospital was becoming a reality. We would soon have an empty large county building. For several years, the Commissioners have been scrutinized by representatives of the Disability Rights of Montana, the agency charged with enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act, with allegations that the County is not in compliance with the ADA in the existing courthouse. We then advertised for Request for Qualifications (RFQ's) for Architectural Services to provide design services to an existing county building to accommodate courthouse offices relocation and renovation. In that process, 6 firms submitted RFQ's and after review by the selection committee, 3 firms were short listed and received further consideration for a contract. Spectrum Group was chosen to explore an option of locating county offices in the old hospital building once it was vacated.

July 2012 - Correspondence from District Judge Jones stated his concerns of safety with the possible relocation of the courtroom and other county offices and he requested the Commission consult the architect to consider a detailed feasibility study.

January 2013 - The Commissioners wrote an open letter to the citizens of Stillwater County via the Stillwater County News, to inform and update our constituents with respect to steps the Commission has taken to address major problems associated with the county courthouse. In that letter, to be clear, we have not made any decisions other than the hiring of Spectrum Group Architects to assist us in the gathering of factual information to determine the office space needs of the county and identify issues pertaining to both the courthouse and former hospital building. In the spirit of cooperation, we stated in that letter that we intend to explore as many options as possible.

July and

August 2013 - We requested Spectrum Group to prepare a proposal to amend their contract to include additional facility evaluations for the purpose of determining options for providing county services to the community.

The Contract was amended to provide evaluation studies for the following:

1. Remodel "Old Hospital" into County Offices

2. Remodel the Existing Courthouse
3. New County Complex - On a New Site
4. New Law and Justice Center - On a New Site
5. New Law and Justice Complex - On the existing Courthouse Site.

September 2013 - The Hospital moved out of the building and relocated.

January 2015 - The Commissioners held public informational meetings in the communities of Absarokee, Columbus, and Park City where Spectrum Group Architects presented the (4) alternates developed. Handouts were provided at each meeting; posted on the County website, and available on the first floor of the courthouse.

April 2015 - A public hearing was set for tonight - May 5, 2015, with regards to the (5) five options with (4) four alternates that were developed. A legal notice was published in the Stillwater County News, and the Laurel Outlook. Notices were also posted on the county website and courthouse bulletin boards. An announcement has been running on the Stillwater Community Radio 1620AM.

May 2015 - Public Hearing - The purpose of this hearing is to accept comments from proponents and opponents regarding the five (5) options with (4) alternatives identified by the planning process for providing additional county office space for county services.

Call for Comments - Commissioner Davey asked those wishing to make comments to state their name for the record as the hearing is being recorded. She asked those commenting to please be considerate of other who wish to speak by limiting the comments to a reasonable length reminding those present that an hour and a half has been set for the public hearing.

Commissioner Davey then proceeded to call for for proponents and opponents of each Alternate beginning with Alternate 1 and finishing with Alternate 4. A transcript of the verbal comments spoken and copies of written comments accepted are on file in the Clerk & Recorders Office - Document No. 362196. No action was taken at this hearing.

Close the Hearing - Commissioner Shupak thanked everyone for coming and stated the Commissioners will take written comments until May 19, 2015. He told those present that if they knew someone that was unable to make the hearing tonight and would like to comment, please have them write a letter to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Davey told those present that all the plans and documents are on file in the Clerk and Recorder's Office. She challenged the folks to go to

the Clerk & Recorder's Office and take a look at the documents and look and see what we have asked our architect to do and see what they've have done for us. She said we have received more public comments and they are in file at the courthouse with the Clerk & Recorder, stating *you will get the accurate information.*

All three Commissioners thanked everyone for attending whereupon the hearing was concluded at 7:40 PM.