

Minutes of the County Commissioners special meeting held on February 26, 2025

The Board of the Grady County Commissioners met on this day for a regularly scheduled meeting with the following board members: Gary Bray, Zachary Davis, and Ruth Bingham.

The meeting was called to order and roll call: Gary Bray, Zachary Davis, and Ruth Bingham.

Ben Smith representing Principle Design introduced himself to the Board, he stated that he is the founder of the company and then he gave a list of some of the counties he has worked with. He told the Commissioners that he was not new to how County Government works. A lot of the problems that we are having, he has seen across the state between storage needs, aging building, and aging systems. He would like to be a part of this renovation.

Commissioner Davis stated that he had been asked about the historical preservation of the building. He asked Mr. Smith if he could give them some ideas on how we could ensure that the building is preserved. He felt like the Courthouse is in good shape historically, they would be working around all the fine details of the Courthouse, and the exterior of the building is in really good shape. It would be a high priority to preserve the character of the building. It is the people's Courthouse so we would not come in and make it look modern, it needs to look like a proud County Courthouse, Mr. Smith stated.

Commissioner Bingham stated that Judge Kirkland has expressed the historical value of his Courtroom and wants to make sure nothing changes in this courtroom, as it is one of the few Ceremonial Courtrooms in the State of Oklahoma. Mr. Smith stated that one of the things they would do would be to go around to every official and ask them what their needs were multiple times.

Dillon Walts, Project Manager/Engineer representing Salas O'Brian stated that they have been working on this project under prior leadership a few years back. They were asked to look at places that could be improved. He stated that they have worked on several courthouses with Principle Design and are working together on some ongoing projects at this time. It is difficult to keep a building up and running, while improving the systems with everything behind the walls, but they do have the experience to accomplish the task.

Jeff McClure, with CMS Willowbrook, introduced himself and stated that they had done several projects on the courthouse in the past 10 years. Mr. McClure stated that they did some exterior projects to the courthouse, the new courtroom in the basement, and some minor projects through the years.

Jason Hicks, D.A. stated that there have been some ideas on what to do with the Courthouse but no decisions have been made and that is why a feasibility study will be needed to start this process. There are many needs and talking with Officials on what these needs are is a crucial part of this project. He stated that he grew up in Grady County and this Courthouse is a landmark for the community for decades. If we are going to preserve a 100-year-old building, it is going to cost us some money and that is why we are looking at our options.

Zachary Davis made a motion to approve to hire the following professional services for the restoration and expansion addition of the Grady County Courthouse, reference Oklahoma Statute 18 § 803(6) and 19 § 1501 (A)3: Architect – Principle Design, Engineer – Salas O'Brian, and General Construction Manager – CMS Willowbrook. It was seconded by Ruth Bingham. AYE: Gary Bray, Zachary Davis, and Ruth Bingham.

Commissioner Davis stated that it is obvious that we are not going to solve all our issues here today, this subject will be a repeated question.

Commissioner Bingham stated that she was under the impression that the DA would like to have his office in the courthouse if possible. Mr. Hicks said yes, this would be something he would like to see

happen. Commissioner Bingham said her thought would be to make the courthouse reside over the court system while housing the DA, the Judges, and the Court Clerk's office, and then there would be an annex built for the rest of the Officials. Commissioner Bingham would like to look at using the Use Tax and would like everyone to look at their budgets and see where they could cut costs. It would be best if we could fund this ourselves instead of going to the tax payers.

Mr. Hicks stated that there are options on what we could do, but he thinks the first step is a feasibility study. If we could keep all the offices inside the courthouse that would be ideal, but we need to be thinking of the future as well. The courthouses that he has seen that have been renovated, when you walk in them, you can envision the courthouse the way it was in the past but with modern upgrades. The courthouse should remain an icon to the community and be something we can be proud of.

Commissioner Bingham stated she is concerned with displacing the offices, during the tax season, and with the courts with security. She is looking forward to the project and would like to get started. She feels the same as everyone else, this is a beautiful building and it needs to be taken care of.

Commissioner Davis asked what does the design time frame look like to get started; Ben Smith answered at least 6 months depending on how it evolves. One of the first things that will need to be addressed is how to operate while construction is taking place. If we are talking about another building, like an annex then it could take longer. It is an option to stay in the courthouse while work is being done but the ideal thing is to move everyone, do the renovation, and then move everyone back in.

Mr. Walts stated that he could speak on the engineered systems that the courthouse uses, they are outdated and lots of abandoned technology. When we first started looking at the project, they inspected the electrical and plumbing systems. They have been working on how to provide the building with a back-up generator and have been working with the local utility company to upgrade the electric service.

Discussion was held on possible ways to move all offices out of the courthouse during the renovation.

Judge Lowe stated that it sounded like we need to do a feasibility study on whether we keep this building for everyone or build a new one, is that correct? Jason Hicks stated yes, there is no way to know which way is more feasible, what would give us the most bang for the buck unless we do a feasibility study. We need a 4th judge so looking at getting a new courtroom while we do the renovation would be ideal.

Commissioner Davis stated this is a 55,000 square foot building, that the space is not being used efficiently therefore if they can do the study and find more space in this building then we could possibly just stay in this building.

Ms. Burton requested the County Clerk, Treasurer, and Assessor office stay together as these offices work so close together.

Mr. Smith stated that keeping the court system in the Courthouse makes sense and have the other Officials relocated to an annex.

Sydney Richardson asked if there would be a way to switch some of the Officials over to the DA building and bring the DA's office in to the Courthouse. Mr. Hicks said it would be an option, and it is big enough to hold several offices, and we should have that conversation.

Mr. Sifers asked Mr. Smith how much it cost to renovate the Cordell Courthouse, he responded that it costs somewhere between \$5 - \$7 million dollars and would be twice that much today.

Mr. Smith stated that he felt the Grady County Courthouse was in great shape structurally, as it is well built. The Courthouse seems to be in a water tight condition and he didn't have many concerns with the outside of the building.

Gary Bray made a motion to approve to adjourn. It was seconded by Zachary Davis. AYE: Gary Bray, Zachary Davis, and Ruth Bingham.

Passed and approved on Monday, March 3, 2025.

Attest:

Gill Locke

County Clerk

Seal



The Board of the Grady County Commissioners

Gary P. Bray
Chairman

Ruth Bingham
Vice Chairman

Zachary Davis
Member