



THE NEWTON COUNTY COMMISSION
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State of the County – Part 1

It's Official!

The Newton County Judicial Center is Open For Business!

I'm proud to announce we are on budget and close to our amended schedule after experiencing an unavoidable delay.

Allow me to reiterate our reasons for deciding to move the courts. Why we decided to renovate rather than "new build" at this time, and where.

First and foremost the Courthouse location had a severe shortage of space, with poor placement for both existing and new personnel. There was the issue of flooding in Division II, the lower level courtroom, and the need for jury space in the Division III courtroom. Privacy was lacking on all levels for officials, personnel and constituents. However, the recent need for increased security tops the list. Danger now exists at even small county court houses and the cost to make total adjustments to secure the present Courthouse building were astronomical.

Basically, it boils down to location and cost! Many people wanted us to remain on the historical Neosho square if possible and taxpayers did not want an additional multi-million dollar tax burden that would be required to build new, however that option is still viable once we become a first class county and once our county revenue increases substantially.

Thanks for your patience, your help, your support! Together we create another historical location to serve county, community residents, constituents, employees and officials as well as visitors to our historical square. Thank you also to our unending list of supporters who went above and beyond to insure that we have a new home that is affordable as well as highly functional. Sometimes renovation is more difficult than new build.

We extend our appreciation to our architect, Jennifer Wilson, owner of NForm Architecture in Springfield, who offers a specialty in Missouri courthouse renovations and CSG, Construction Services Group, our contractor from Neosho. I cannot brag enough about our own maintenance crew, Bobby, Chris & Robert, who have dedicated themselves to provide the best service. Court Circuit Clerk, Patty Krueger and Beverly Stuart, have been working tirelessly with us since day one. The entire court crew has chipped in and helped with every facet from planning to heavy lifting. Yay for you! The Office of State Courts Administration came from Jefferson City to assist with planning and moving and Teen Challenge provided muscle power. You could catch Commissioners Jim Jackson and Alan Cook onsite almost every morning before official business began.

As for me, I'm extremely proud of the project and I extend my personal thanks to all the above mentioned. They made the overall project and stress of budget constraints minimal and fun (at times)!

We will let you know in advance the date of the ribbon cutting.

Marilyn Ruestman – Presiding Commissioner



State of the County – Part 2

Let's talk about the new renovated justice center located at 123 E. Main, Neosho, Missouri. People ask, what does the new justice center have to offer that was not previously available? I'll list the major upgrades.

- Security is first class! All visitors will enter at a single location and go through basic screening. Staff areas and private court documents will be under lock.
- Camera surveillance is increased and upgraded, both inside and out.
- Fiber, phones, and technology capability is all updated.
- Inmates will enter the building through a new "sally port" and remain secure until their scheduled appearance.
- A second elevator is used by personnel and law enforcement, thus allowing easier public access to the public elevator.
- Staff is now centrally located to enable immediate transference of information, access to each office, and upgraded space and equipment.
- A fully equipped break room is provided for all personnel.
- For the first time, attorneys will have private quarters to have discussions with clients. No confidential conversations will have to take place in the hallway.
- A new public announcement system is in place.
- A sprinkler system has been installed.
- Floor design has removed the need for intermingling of inmates, citizens, judges, and personnel, allowing for increased privacy and movement.
- Public facilities are clean and improved.
- Public parking lots will be easily accessed.
- Judges now have three jury rooms, more personal space, and new holding areas.
- Two new deliberation rooms are designed to accommodate hearings as well as visiting judges and officials.

Our intent is to make your visit to the court system safe, comfortable, more accessible and pleasant.

Newton County is blessed to have officials and court staff who are seriously dedicated to serving the citizens and providing a top notch judicial system. Thanks again to Commissioner Jim Jackson who worked overtime alongside our maintenance department. To Circuit Clerk Patty Krueger and Beverly Stuart and their staff who worked nonstop during the move. Special thanks to Commissioner Alan Cook who served as the "point person" for the project from beginning to end.

Presiding Commissioner
Marilyn Ruestman