

## **SPECIAL COMMISSIONERS MEETING - TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2008**

Commissioner Pat Geissman called the special meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in Balcony Room B with Stephen D. Hambley and Sharon A. Ray present. The purpose of the “Project Design Kick-Off Meeting” was for the elected officials and department heads that use the courthouses to get an overview of the project to date, an overview of the design process and preliminary schedule, and to meet the Medina County Courthouse Expansion and Renovation Project architect:

Thomas (Tom) S. Potts, Principal  
Silling Associates/Architects  
405 Capitol Street, Upper Atrium  
Charleston, WV 25301-1727  
304-346-0565 (voice), 304-346-1522 (fax)  
[tpotts@silling.com](mailto:tpotts@silling.com)    [www.silling.com](http://www.silling.com)

The elected officials and department heads that use the courthouses introduced themselves to Mr. Potts. (A sign up sheet is attached as Exhibit A.)

Mr. Potts said that since June he has been studying the work that has been done to date, had conversations with the Commissioners and County Administrator Chris Jakab, and looked into design opportunities. Silling Associates is humbled and grateful to be chosen for the project by Medina County. He is a registered architect and a member of the American Institute of Architects and has much experience in courtroom and courthouse design. Silling Associates is a 16-member firm with 4 registered architects, 3 interns with degrees, interior designers, and support personnel. Silling has a long and successful history of project collaboration with Scheeser Buckley Mayfield (consulting, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and telecommunications engineers from Akron, Ohio), Shelley Metz Baumann Hawk (consulting structural engineers from Columbus, Ohio) and GAI Consultants (consulting civil engineers and landscape architects from Cincinnati, Ohio). The design team staff includes over 100 design professionals, of which, over 75% are based locally in Ohio. They are bringing to the table a group of people that are experienced in court work and working with each other. Mr. Potts will be the team leader.

Silling Associates has about 15 court clients, mostly in West Virginia, and he explained how West Virginia’s courts compare to Ohio’s courts. They have the Circuit Court (on par with Ohio’s Common Pleas Court), Magistrate’s Court, Family Law Court (similar to Ohio’s Domestic Relations Court and Juvenile Court), and Drug Court. Their clients’ old courthouses were similar to Medina County’s historic courthouse with one big courtroom upstairs and administrative offices underneath. Courts have specialized as populations and caseloads grew. In West Virginia, they took the old courthouses and made them an administrative-type facility, and centralized it into a new modern judicial facility. He showed slides of some of their court work and pointed out general principles and best practices. For security and operational purposes they have a centralized single point of entry that requires only one security checkpoint with an X-ray machine and magnetometer. There are holding cells, a secure vehicular sally port, and a dedicated elevator to isolate detainees from the staff and court patrons. The easy way-finding signage shows the best way around the courthouse while keeping the staff population separate and secure. The courtrooms (with gallery and jury box) are simple; they have minimal woodwork and do not have high ceilings to meet the client’s budget, but they have all of the security and technology of a modern courtroom. A courthouse is a very public building and the icon of the county. Appropriately, as a public building, a courthouse needs a public or civic space that is open with windows looking at the vista beyond. Sustainability and future growth are also important principles.

The architecture is about fitting in with the existing context and trying to bring that architectural language to a new design and not be a “copy cat” of some historic architectural language. There will be discussions about how to address the additions to the facility complementarily from the outside, while at the same time making it a statement about this time and this age and a balance between modern and historic expression.

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Mr. Silling said that those in the room had already done the Bialosky study, completed questionnaires, and were interviewed regarding their requirements. Over the next six weeks, Silling Associates will start by meeting with them, clarifying the information in the questionnaires, and taking their space program and building their own space program. They will not reinvent the wheel, but will take the information they provided and make a transition to the Silling database.

There was a question about the two existing Common Pleas Courtrooms remaining where they are located now. Ms. Ray said that was one of the concepts, but nothing is “set in stone”. The judges had indicated that their courtrooms were fairly adequate, but needed technology, mechanical and wiring updates. Keeping the existing buildings and adding on was the concept that was heavily favored. Mr. Hambley said that may be the most efficient, likely scenario, but that was why they hired Silling Associates - to study the flow and how everything works together. One of the reasons the Commissioners chose Silling Associates was their creativity with the expansion of the front, as well as expansion in the back of the courthouse. They will go through the process, lay it all out, and learn the pluses and minuses to each of those options.

Mr. Potts said he would hope they could take themselves out of a preconceived design. They would like to approach the programming process in a vacuum. He had asked if they had an ideal world, what they would put in it. They will take that information and prioritize it according to the budget. The starting point is the programming information showing that there would be approximately 30,000 square feet of new construction to be added to the existing facility and the total container would be approximately 67,000 square feet. They will develop alternative concepts and bring them back and weigh those against the goals and objectives. They will provide guidance whether something is an extravagant expense. The cost of a new construction is about \$270 per square foot. They will assemble the requirements into a spreadsheet and arrive at a cost. There will be an open review in two to three weeks and then there will be some tradeoffs.

There was a short discussion about the changing needs of a courthouse building in a fast-growing community. Mr. Potts said their needs from three years ago will be different and that is why they have a validation process. Mr. Jakab added that part of the assessment process included ten-year projected needs. Mr. Potts will update the previous work that has been done and ensure that it is still accurate.

Mr. Potts presented and reviewed the space programming summary that was taken from the Bialosky study showing the various square footage needs of the officials. After consensus, they will have a master planning process where they will bring to the table some conceptual diagrammatic long-term concepts generated from the discussions. They will discuss the new construction and renovations, the phasing scheme, and the costs. There will be about a 26-week process to get to the bidding process and then they can begin construction that should take about 18 months.

Mr. Potts scheduled the programming reviews with the officials on October 29 beginning at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m. on a motion by Mr. Hambley and a second by Ms. Ray. There was no discussion. Roll call vote showed all Commissioners voting AYE.

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All deliberations concerning official business and formal actions by this Board of Commissioners were conducted in an open public meeting this twenty-first day of October, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

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Pamela M. Vereb, Clerk

COMMISSIONERS \_\_\_\_\_  
Sharon A. Ray

OF \_\_\_\_\_  
Patricia G. Geissman

MEDINA COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen D. Hambley