

Interior courthouse renovation could be less costly

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Grants, etc. could play part

MOUND CITY – After hearing the first sales pitch of two last week on alternatives available to renovate the Linn County Courthouse, the commissioners heard the second sales pitch Monday morning.

Kevin Ward, representing Trane, spoke to the commissioners and mentioned the Linn County Courthouse, like Osage and Doniphan Counties, is in the process of an entire facility renovation.

Ward told the commissioners that in his opinion, they should hold off on any major decisions until January of 2010 when new 90/10 matching grants from the state would be available. He continued that the \$167 million Facility Conservation Improvement Project that is available to assist municipalities, schools, etc. to do energy and operational savings that are used to finance those same repairs would not benefit Linn County as much as a grant situation.

Ward explained that in his experience, facilities over 40,000 sq. ft. make the most economical sense and it would not benefit Linn County to become involved in the project with only 15,000 sq. ft. involved.

He said that Linn County would be better off using the historical tax credits and historical grant projects they are already pursuing.

Ward then told the commissioners his engineers had toured the courthouse and found several areas the county could upgrade without major costs. Some of those areas include caulking storm windows to prevent large air leaks.

Next, he said the county could continue using window air conditioning units, but upgrade them to high-efficiency units. He explained that to convert to internal cooling with large units, repiping the courthouse would be very expensive and probably not help overall cooling.

According to Ward, upgrade areas that would benefit from the grant would be internal electrical service as it is out of code and needs service.

He also said that the lighting needs upgraded, but again, Ward said the county could do the upgrades by themselves by purchasing high efficiency lights and installing them with county labor.

He then spoke of the boiler and the fact that the unit is reaching the end of its life. He said the piping is good, as are the radiators, but the grant could be written to include the boiler unit.

Ward explained that the grants come from a \$2.2 million stimulus package and are broken down into \$150,000 portions, but, until January, they are on hold to see how the program will be administered.

Ward said, "You could end up with a grant covering a lion's share of the project."