

MINUTES
WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
June 20, 2023

The Wilkes County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at 3:30 P.M. with the following members present: Chairman Keith Elmore, Vice Chairman Stoney Greene, Commissioner Casey Joe Johnson, Commissioner Bill Sexton, and Commissioner Greg Minton.

Also present for the meeting were John Yates, County Manager; Tony Triplett, County Attorney; Chris Huffman, Finance Director; Brooke Felts, Assistant County Attorney; and Sarah Call, Clerk to the Board.

Chairman Keith Elmore welcomed everyone and called the work session to order.

PRESENTATION OF SPACE BLOCKING – WILKES COUNTY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE BUILDING – Chairman Elmore recognized Kris Little and Logan Church with Vannoy Construction. Mr. Little handed out the space blocking plan and thanked the Board for having them. He stated the block out plan is the big picture overview of what they have been working on. The programming space drives itself with the needs for the floor plan for a majority of the office space. They will need the Board's input with the outside and what they want this to look like, that will be the next big decision to make. Mr. Little said he and Mr. Yates spent lots of time talking about the number of employees and the load of patrons that visit the county office. They looked at what is needed to serve these with a focus on the tax office, elections, and accessibility through the blocking plan. He added they looked at current staff, but also need to allow room for growth. These are rough square footage block outs and the next step would be to place the floor plan lines with doors.

Mr. Little said page one is the basement area and the green section would be buried in the dirt if they do the basement. He added Wilkes County zoning is set for three stories, which is measured from the front entry, the public would see level one. The back side of the basement, which is toward the Sheriff's Office and the Agricultural Center is unfinished office space in blue. This area would be in daylight, not under the dirt. Chairman Elmore asked if this is on the lot behind Herring Hall or the smaller lot. Mr. Yates replied the smaller lot. Chairman Elmore asked if the blue area would be facing the Ag Center. Mr. Little replied yes. He added zoning has said if $\frac{3}{4}$ of the basement is buried it will not count as a story, they are trying to give them 45,000 to 48,000 sq. ft. between levels 1, 2 and 3 and they think this will give them what they need. Mr. Little said there are two reasons they want to have the basement, they got the soil report back, it's not terrible, but 30-40 feet down it is not ideal and is not fully compacted soils. They would like to handle it with GO Piers which is the most economical. They bring a 24-30 inch auger and drill down. As the auger comes up, they fill it with stone; this creates a pier for the footer. This is an economic value with the basement, it makes the piers much shorter.

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Chairman Elmore asked what is the budget. Mr. Little replied they have not gotten that far yet; the high level look they based it on was about 45,000 sq. ft., which would be maybe \$20-\$21 million, but they have not quantified the site. There are some other advantages to the basement: they can have storage on the green, but the blue can be core shelled out space in the front that could have County Services for further growth needs. They also have growth in the layout plan within the suites as well. He added the biggest thing they hear everywhere they go is it is full before they get in and this is what they are keeping in mind while in the planning stages. The basement helps with this and with the grade and soil issues. Chairman Elmore asked what will they do with the dirt they dig out. Mr. Little replied they will move it to the site across the road and continue to work on the slope and steepness of the bank above the Sheriff's Department.

Mr. Little said he would like to mention the parking, they will have more parking day one than is here currently. The new site is about 2.4 acres, but they may add a crosswalk and auxiliary parking lot for special events and things like early voting. The cross walk would be on the lot which is the future DSS/Health site that is much larger. They can have some shared parking and zoning will allow for this. He added DOT may allow a flashing light for the cross walk, but not anything else, they found this out with the EMS site. Mr. Yates added the County owns the road.

Mr. Little went through the rough draft space blocking plan for level 1 in detail with the Board at this time. Chairman Elmore asked if the righthand side is the view back to town. Why wouldn't they want the conference room or meeting room where the view is. They need to take advantage of the views where the meeting rooms are located. Mr. Little said they agree they want the Meeting Room, Commissioners, and a lot of the staff to have the good views. Vice Chairman Greene added the meeting room will have the beautiful mountain view where it is located on the plan. Mr. Little said they were trying to achieve the mountain view and he understands the concerns in how the building needs to be angled. They have the technology to lay the building footprint on the site and show them a few options of how they can orient it on the site to make sure the views are maximized. They also have someone to take drone photos at 14 feet, 28 feet, and 34 feet and turn 15 degrees each way and take pictures to see the view from each floor to help get the placement they want and the best views. Mr. Little said they will bring this to the next work session. Vice Chairman Greene asked the elevation of the 3rd floor. Mr. Little said they have been discussing 15-16 feet floor to floor. The 1st floor would be 0- 16, 2nd 16-32 and 3rd 32-48, zoning has cleared 46 feet before and working with hotels up to 50 feet, so 48 feet would not be an issue.

Mr. Little went thought the blocking plan for level 2 at this time. They would like to include the open view for floors 1 and 2 to the bottom of the 3rd floor. They would do an inexpensive architectural feature that they will decide on later. It will not take up a lot of space, but will be a nice feature to have for the first two floors.

Mr. Little went through the 3rd floor block out plans at this time. They plan to add a landing zone for the Commissioners and give them access to the back of the meeting room which is how most are set up. He added some of the locations will change for legal and HR and may also change where IT and purchasing are located on the other floor as well. They discussed where would be the best location for IT with their server room, foot traffic, and the deliveries they have. Mr. Little said if they do the basement, this may be the best place for IT off the back right in the daylighted

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space as one small finished suite. This will help to give them a conduit from the basement to the top floor 4ft x 4ft which should help and they will be on a generator fulltime. He added Mr. Yates has reminded them many times that Elections can't go down, especially during one-stop voting, so they will be on the generator along with IT. They are looking at a full building generator as well.

Chairman Elmore asked if this is 65,000 sq. ft. with the basement. Mr. Little said it is about 14,500 per floor x 3 = 43,500 finished space, plus the basement at 14,500 mostly unfinished space, total 58,000. Vice Chairman Greene asked about the loading dock, as most of the places they visited had this. Mr. Little said they have talked about this and wanted to do it where the mail room is located if they could. When they discussed this with Justin Church he said he is not sure they can get the grade to work for a dock. Chairman Elmore asked if they have a need for a dock. Mr. Yates replied yes, they have some big truck deliveries, especially around election time. Mr. Little said they can look at this with the basement. There may be a way to do this on the lowest level, but he is not sure at this time due to the turning radius needed.

Mr. Little said they wanted to have this first meeting to go over the big picture and then will come back with more details at the next one. This is a suite setup plan which is not like the building they are in now, which is a great facility. The circle hallway with so many halls and doors are a waste of unusable space. There is much less white space in the new design than in the current building, especially in the 3rd floor, and this is why they are looking to do suites. They will not have a lot of doors in and out of the suites, for example if they go to see the building inspector they can go see the administrative assistants or go to one of the many other doors on that hallway. In the new plan, they would go in that suite and the ladies would be out front, they would direct from there and not have a multitude of doors. This helps on economics, but also for the staff, like the tax appraisers and building inspectors who spend more time in the truck than the office. It does not make sense to spend money on offices. Right now, a commercial door and frame costs \$3K, it is much more expensive than residential. In this plan they will have landing zones, it is not cubical city, but they don't have 4 walls. They can do their paperwork and leave. He added for the ones that spend their time in the office such as the manager, finance, and legal they will have hard walls, but the paralegal may have a cubicle to have float space. The more walls they stand the less flexible the space is and they want to maximize what they have for now and look to the future. They would like to have glass doors for the offices and conference rooms.

Mr. Little said in finance there is a staff of 6, there is probably only 2-3 hard wall offices in this suite and hybrid space for the remaining 3-4, this allows room for growth. The cubical type walls will be like Samaritan's Purse; the stations will have power at the desk and glass at top. He added in the budget they will carry the furniture, they will not short the County on the cost of the building and then tell them they need \$2 million for furniture. They are working with a couple of groups now on this and do not expect it to be that much this is just an estimate.

Mr. Little stated they need to talk about the outside and what the Board wants it to look like. It is almost easier to give them floor plans than it is for the outside look. They have not discussed this. At 3 stories, it will not be a tilt wall like Samaritan's, but could go with precast or panels to achieve that look. He added 10 years ago it was all block or brick, or steel with brick and a little stone accent. They may want this look, it is more an institutional look, but folks will see this from the highway due to the height. Chairman Elmore asked if they want to match the other buildings. Mr. Yates added they cannot do the split faced rock like the Court House, it is very expensive to maintain it has to be sealed every few years, which they are doing again this year. Mr. Little stated they want to consider maintenance

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costs in the decision. Vice Chairman Greene asked what is the most maintenance free. Mr. Little replied more concrete or precast is an option. He stated in Boone, at the last hospital building they did, it is precast with thin brick and it looks great. The brick is on the panels when the precast gets there and it is fairly economical. Mr. Little said they could mix some thin stone in and have many options such as this. The timbers are constant maintenance and they may not want to consider this. He added they want it to have a nice look but not too institutional and low maintenance. They will have the architect give them packets with options for the outside, this is the next thing they will need from the Board. Mr. Little said they can mix brick or stone with metal panels, these panels have 30-year life and are low to no maintenance. They can go vertical with metal and have some really nice built out accents that don't cost a lot, it can have structural steel and metal stud framing behind it but no one knows that. It makes a good tight building and then veneer it with what they want on the outside, less weight is better. Glass and metal on the 3rd floor would be a great option as well. He added they want to do it right and have something to last and look good for a long time.

Chairman Elmore asked the sq. ft of the vestibule. Mr. Little replied about 12 x 20. Chairman Elmore asked about the open area and the sq. ft. there. Mr. Little replied it is about 2,300 to 2,400 in the lobby and the 6 feet halls. This is less expensive space and will all blend in with the suite, the overall is about \$400 per sq. ft., but these are rough numbers and estimates. Chairman Elmore said that puts them over what they thought. Mr. Little said they are under 50,000 sq. ft. this puts them about \$18m and site at maybe \$2m is where they would like to be. Chairman Elmore asked about the cost to heat and cool, how much will it add to the cost for all the open area. Mr. Little said with it not going the full 3 stories to the roof it is negligible, they will lose a little but the heat will be absorbed up to the 3rd floor and in the summer the cool will fall down. If it were open from the bottom to the roof that would be like a vent pipe, but this design is not. Chairman Elmore asked if they have an estimate based on the sq. ft. what it could cost. Mr. Little said they do not but will work on this with the engineering team. Chairman Elmore asked about environmental saving features, skylights, or things along this line. Mr. Little replied they have not talked about green and added they do a lot of things internally to help on this. They have not gotten to the point to evaluate all the mechanical systems, there are a couple ways to go which they briefly discussed at this time. In Wilkes the cool load is more important than the heat load. Their engineering firm will make 2-3 recommendations with numbers to back up each for the Board to decide which they want with the life cycle and data to see how they want to go on that. He added plumbing, electrical, and wiring are pretty simple; code dictates these. He added they will want to discuss controls, as they can use this to help on the heat and cool as well.

Chairman Elmore asked how did they arrive at 50,000 sq. ft. Mr. Little replied they measured this building including the basement, and looked at each area, and counted ceiling tiles and desks. They did not ask each department their needs, which they will do at some point. He added once they get direction from this Board, they will need to talk with each department. They took his narrative and dimensions of this building and current staff then the architect came up with 14,500 per floor. Chairman Elmore said he has pulled up and reviewed the space and cost and cannot come up with these numbers, but he is not a builder. Mr. Little replied the current building is almost the same space, but the offices are way too big. Chairman Elmore said that is his fear, are they going to something smaller, this is a great building. Mr. Little agreed, and added they pick up a lot of program space in the new design and even more with the basement. The machinal space going from the basement to the top like a hospital helps a lot. Vice Chairman Greene added it makes sense to do that, it is cheap space. Mr. Little agreed. Chairman Elmore said if they have 58,000 sq. ft. that would be \$22 million, that is more

than he thought, he was expecting \$19m and \$300 per square foot, not \$400. Mr. Little replied the basement may only be \$75, average against the \$400 upstairs brings the total down.

Chairman Elmore said they need to get a consensus of the Board to see if they are all good with \$20 million plus, it could go \$20m to \$25m. Commissioner Sexton said he was figuring at least \$20m to \$22m. Commissioner Minton said he knew it would be at least \$23m. Commissioner Johnson said he had thought \$20m. He asked about the open to below, their Church was considering this, but thought it was wasted space so they put a room there instead. He added it looks very good and he likes it. Mr. Little replied they are not set on it, they could potentially move the restrooms in some of that area, where it is located in the design is not really feasible usable space. They have to have some level of space for people to come in and more than they have now, that is currently an issue in everyone's opinion. He added this is 15x30 or 450 sq. ft. and could be considered wasted space, he understands what he is saying, but they were trying to have more of a lobby space. They do not lose anything on the 1st and 3rd floor just on the 2nd and that floor will have less traffic than the first. They expect most of the citizens to come day to day to the 1st floor. He added they felt the entire time the Board Meeting space needs to be on the 3rd floor. The current design has 2 public elevators (2 10x10's), 2 carts with one shaft, one will be bid as an alternate because they may not need it and a service elevator that will not be public. Chairman Elmore said they do not need 2 elevators. Mr. Little added this is an easy add alternate, they are doing 4 in the Elkin building they are working on currently, they are not as expensive as everyone thinks. He added with the suite setup it helps, but they will need to make the 3rd floor accessible to the public for meetings and large events and are still looking into this. Code requires two stairs and at least one elevator. The service elevator can be an alternate. At this time, it goes to the basement, each stop it makes does add cost, this is something else they can decide on.

Chairman Elmore stated they have another meeting and will need to wrap this up. Mr. Little asked if the Board would like to have another work session and how soon. Mr. Yates replied if they have one in August would they have the layout plan by that time. Mr. Little replied yes. Vice Chairman Greene asked if they would have the elevation pictures and information by then as well. Mr. Little replied yes, they will set a goal for mid-July to have a packet sent to the Clerk with elevation and then a floor plan by August that will include the sq. ft. Mr. Yates asked when would he have exterior examples. Mr. Little replied the packets in mid-July will have this as well. Chairman Elmore asked them to include energy savings, green items choices, and a cost for these options. Mr. Little said he would include as much as he can for the August work session on this, and would like to include a mechanical engineer to join him and start that conversation. They will need to set the floor plans first and that will be next. Chairman Elmore asked if they need to set a ceiling on the amount, and asked the Board if they are good up to \$25 million. After a brief discussion with the Board Chairman Elmore said it sounds like all but him are good with about \$23 to \$25 million. Mr. Little thanked the board for their time and apologized they ran over.

ADJOURN – The Budget Work Session of the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners adjourned at 4:38 P.M.

Sarah D. Call, Clerk

Gideon Keith Elmore, Chairman

WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Approved: July 6, 2023