



## **FRANKLIN COUNTY GOVERNMENT COURTHOUSE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT UPDATE AUGUST 18, 2020**

During action at its regular monthly meeting Tuesday night, the Franklin County Board hired a local contractor to build a new 46,000-square foot courthouse that will be located on the Benton Public Square.

In a unanimous vote the board accepted the low bid of Fager McGee, a well-known Murphysboro-based commercial contractor, to proceed with work on the new three-story structure. Fager McGee submitted the low bid of \$12,634,000 – which is more than \$1.2 million under the budgeted amount for the much-anticipated project. As part of the bid package Fager McGee estimated that it would take 510 calendar days, approximately 17 months, to build the new courthouse. Construction is expected to begin in early September.

The board also heard an upbeat report from Todd Sweeney, principal owner of Navigate Building Solutions, of St. Louis. Navigate has served as project manager on the mammoth building plan since early in the process.

Sweeney said the total cost of the project, that includes Campbell Building construction, asbestos abatement, demolition, special construction, furniture and fixtures, professional services, technology, financing and miscellaneous costs came in at \$18,492,297, which is \$2.3 million below the projected budget cost of \$20.8 million. The lower budget numbers include a 10 percent savings in demolition and asbestos abatement, 10 percent under the general construction cost schedule and 5 percent decrease in construction contingency from \$1,384,977 to \$631,700.

Sweeney said Fager McGee is local and has familiarity with sub-contractors in the region and has also worked on several successful projects with White & Borgononi Architects, located in Carbondale, who is overseeing the project.

Based on the new decreased budget numbers submitted by Sweeney, Franklin County Treasurer Steve Vercellino presented more good news with a detailed

report to the board regarding sales tax for the courthouse construction. Vercellino said that based on projected sales tax revenue the debt for the new courthouse will be paid off in December 2029 – slightly more than nine years from the start of construction. The projected December 2029 is also a far shorter time period than was first anticipated. In the initial stages of planning it was projected that the payback time would be 12 to 15 years.

Franklin County Board Chairman Randall Crocker said he is “very pleased” with the cost projections, the shorter payoff period and with the progress that has taken place.

“The entire process has really gone well up to this point,” said Crocker. “We are way under budget and I can speak for the entire board in saying that we are proud and happy with where we currently are and what we’ve accomplished to date.”

Crocker gave high marks to both project manager Navigate and also White & Borgononi Architects, for the guidance they have provided to the board through the different aspects of the process.

“I think both have provided us with really good advice,” said Crocker. “We are on schedule and I am really pleased with where we are at right now.”

In other action the board confirmed that a lease agreement has been reached for the use of a parking lot on East Church Street for use by construction workers. By utilizing the East Church Street property, the board hopes to alleviate parking on the public square and adjacent parking lots by construction workers. The property formerly house Benton Grade School District 47 offices. It’s estimated that at the height of construction 50-70 workers will be involved in the courthouse construction project. The county will pay \$900 per month to Rend Investments, LLC to use the lot.

The board also hired Holcomb Foundation Engineering for material testing at the new courthouse.