



**FRANKLIN COUNTY GOVERNMENT
COURTHOUSE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT UPDATE
5/11/2020**

Loose ends are being tied up and final plans are in the works as demolition of the Franklin County Courthouse is scheduled to begin in the coming weeks and construction of a new 46,000-square-foot courthouse slated to begin in August.

Here are some important and crucial updates:

During action at the Monday, May 4 county board meeting, Wellington Environmental, located in St. Louis, was awarded the low bid of \$213,140 to complete asbestos abatement at the Franklin County Courthouse. The work has to be completed prior to demolition. The abatement is supposed to begin on May 18 and take approximately 4-6 weeks to complete.

The board will let bids for demolition of the old courthouse in early July with a time frame for bidding and a complete razing of the 175-year-old structure to be completed by mid-August. Additionally, bids for construction of the new courthouse are scheduled to be advertised by the end of June with a September 1 time frame to begin construction.

A parking lot on the property that formerly housed the Benton Evening News has been completed with striping and bumper blocks installed during the last week of April. The parking lot that has the capacity for 26 cars, is located immediately east of the Campbell Building and adjacent to the parking lot near Capitol Park.

The county is also in discussion regarding other potential properties that could be used for additional parking south of the Campbell Building and is also looking to secure temporary parking for the large number of construction workers that will be involved in construction of the new courthouse.

The county board has already secured permission for the use of the part of the parking at First Baptist Church, located on South Main Street. The parking lot west of the church is being used. The board also recently sent a letter to all employees asking them to refrain from parking on the Public Square and said the part of the bid process for construction of the new courthouse will have a provision that no construction workers will be allowed to park on the public square. Additionally, the city of Benton, as a means to help businesses, modified an ordinance that would prohibit any employee or business owner that works on the square from parking.

On January 21, 2020 the county board voted unanimously to adopt a budget of \$20.8 million for the funding package that will include the cost of the new 46,000 square foot courthouse that is scheduled for construction later this year. The \$20.8 million cost is approximately \$3 million less than the original proposal submitted. It is very important to note that the \$20.8 million budget also includes the \$1.6 million to renovate the 21,000-square-foot Campbell Building and another \$1.6 million in construction contingency added to offset any cost overrides. Navigate Building Solutions, of St. Louis, is serving as project manager for the construction phase of the new courthouse. Todd Sweeney, owner of Navigate, was at the meeting and told board members that he fully believes the \$1.6 million in construction contingency can be returned to the county. Sweeney said his company recently completed a large project in St. Charles, MO that had a \$25 million budget and a construction contingency of \$2.5 million. He said all the construction bids in St. Charles came in within the proposed budget and the entire \$2.5 million was not used. Subtracting the cost of the Campbell Building renovation (\$1.6 million) and the construction contingency (\$1.6 million) the cost of the construction (including all professional, architect and other costs) the cost of the actual construction of the new courthouse is projected to be in the range of \$17.5 million to \$18 million.

The county board is also in the process of securing furniture bids and also is working on a deadline to remove any of the final items in the old courthouse including any antique items that will be saved and then incorporated into the new construction when it begins.

The next county board meeting is slated for Tuesday, May 19, 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic the county board has been meeting for the past six weeks via tele-conference.