

News Article

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Commission sets aside money for furniture

By Pamela Brust

PARKERSBURG - Facing between \$40,000 and \$50,000 worth of funding requests for new furniture from various Wood County officials whose offices are moving into the new annex, county commissioners voted Thursday to set aside \$15,000 from in video lottery money to address furniture needs "as they arise."

Meeting with the commission on Thursday, Sheriff Ken Merritt presented the latest proposal, totaling \$5,333 worth of furnishings for his sheriff's tax office, which will be relocating from the third floor of the Wood County Courthouse to the new Judge Donald F. Black Courthouse Annex.

"I set up there where you are so I understand how tight money is, but I went up and looked at the furniture and did a little history on it. Most of the furniture up there was from the time period when Gene Knotts was the assessor, and some of it goes as far back as (former Sheriffs) Lee Bechtold and Chester Airhart. The furniture store says it was built in the 1940s. I'm not saying it's going to fall down, but we are moving into a new building and it would be nice if we could replace it. I feel it's (the new annex) going to be a showcase, I'd appreciate any consideration. This is what we need, not what we'd like to have," Merritt said about the proposed purchases.

Sheriff's Tax Deputy Bob Tranquill said the cost estimates were through a federal contract so the costs were less than they would have been at retail prices.

"It's very plain, nothing fancy about it," Merritt said.

The list of furnishings included chairs, desks/workstations, worksurfaces, modesty panels for desks, stack-on hutches with doors and locks, tackboard, lights, keyboard platforms, and metal center drawers.

"We also had requests from the prosecutor's office, and others and we were supplied numbers by the architect for additional furniture requests, which were totaling between \$40,000 and \$50,000," commission President Rick Modesitt said.

"We were expecting the elected officials to bring the furniture they are currently using in their particular office areas, then the commission paid for all the furniture in public areas like waiting areas, conference rooms, meeting rooms, and anything that was built as it relates to the addition of the building. That was nearly \$100,000 worth of furniture there," Modesitt said.

"What happened here (referring to the sheriff's tax office) was they decided not to use the conference room, and are using it instead as an office, so the change in the furniture need is different now. They indicated the furniture they have isn't really worth moving, so there might be some cases where we want to allocate funds," Modesitt said.

"I think we need to take a look at a couple things. There is something to be said for some new furniture. We did nearly \$100,000 worth of furnishings for conference rooms, kichenettes, and so forth. We've asked the elected officials to take as much of their current furniture as possible. But we understand some of this is hand-me-down furniture," Modesitt said.

"Of course we are moving the Emergency Services director's offices upstairs, so that furniture up there in your offices could be used for that, and that would be furniture we wouldn't need to get," Modesitt said.

"It's not that it isn't useable, but it doesn't go with the decor of the new building," Merritt commented.

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Initially, Merritt was told the commission would need some time to make a decision, then the commissioners later voted to set aside \$15,000 from special projects fund, which is the county's video lottery money, for furniture needs "as they arise."

Furniture for the family court portion of the new annex is being paid for by the West Virginia State Supreme Court of Appeals. Family court officials said they are also using some of their furnishings that will be moved to the new site. The annex is expected to be completed around mid-June.

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