



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: May 24, 2016

Prepared By/Phone Number:

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Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head:

Jessica Rio, County Executive,
Planning & Budget, 512-854-9106
Roger Jefferies, County Executive,
Justice and Public Safety, 512-854-4415

Commissioners Court Sponsor: Sarah Eckhardt, Travis County Judge

AGENDA LANGUAGE:

Consider and take appropriate action on the preparation of an updated Evaluation of Building Systems for the Historic U.S. Courthouse in Austin and proposed use plan as a part of the application process to obtain the property.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:

On January 26, 2016, the Commissioners Court approved the use of consultant resources to assist county staff with the evaluation of potential project sites and options for developing a solution for Civil and Family Courts additional capacity. As a part of the process identified, the Commissioners Court determined that a new committee should be seated to assist staff and act as a sounding board during the evaluation of site options and concept discussions. The charge for the Citizen Advisory Committee was approved by the Commissioners Court on February 2, 2016, and the first meeting was held on March 31, 2016.

Since their first meeting, the Committee has expressed interest in the notion that the historic U.S. Federal Courthouse located at 200 West Eight Street, might have a role in lessening the shortage of space in the Travis County court system. They have asked to be updated on the ongoing General Services Administration (GSA) process to declare the federal courthouse surplus property, located at 200 West Eight Street, and offer it to the market in some fashion.

The U.S. Federal Courthouse is an historic structure that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and therefore qualifies as an historic surplus property. There is a process that allows for such qualifying properties to be transferred to local governments at no acquisition cost in an "as is" condition. This program allows for some adaptive reuse under Secretary of Interior Standards.

Through conversations with GSA Real Estate staff, it is anticipated that this process will be opened soon for applications from public entities to acquire the property. Travis County will fall into this category if there is interest in pursuing the property as part of a court system facility solution.

While the application process for this approach to acquisition is onerous and the time frame for application completion short, it offers the advantage of having no acquisition cost. Renovation and repair costs, however, would need to be funded by the County to occupy the building. The application under this approach requires a preservation plan, cost estimates, and commitments as to the proposed use and maintenance of the historically significant aspects and areas of the building. These provisions are not unexpected for an historic structure. The building is 80 years old and was opened in 1936. While it is perceived to be in good repair, it is prudent to expect that maintenance, repair, renovation and restoration work will need to be performed before the building can be occupied if a County application is submitted and accepted.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff is aware that **GenslerAustin** prepared an *Evaluation of Building Systems for the Historic U.S. Courthouse Austin* in February of 2014 for the GSA. This report meets most of the requirements of the application for obtaining real property under Public Law 107-217, which allows for the transfer of historic surplus property.

Staff requests authorization to work with the Purchasing Agent to prepare an exemption order to begin negotiations with **GenslerAustin** to provide an update and changes to their original report and completion of technical requirements for an application for the Commissioners Court to consider as a part of the process to obtain the property. Staff believes this is the most cost effective way to complete this needed work.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

Due to their recent work for the GSA to propose a reuse of the building, **GenslerAustin** has knowledge and familiarity with the rules, regulations for use, historically significant features and areas, and repairs needed to the building. Working with **GenslerAustin** to prepare an application for Travis County will save time and money while ensuring a high quality application and stakeholder participation process to define, cost and describe changes needed to the building as required by the application. **GenslerAustin** is eminently qualified to perform the work needed to complete the application.

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Funds to support an agreement with **GenslerAustin** are available in the Civil and Family Justice (Planning) Reserve. Once a contract amount is negotiated funds will be requested from this reserve.

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS: NA

ATTACHMENTS: NA

CC

Diana Ramirez, Director Economic Development & Strategic Investments

Travis R. Gatlin, Budget Director

Cyd Grimes, Purchasing Agent

Marvin Brice, Assistant Purchasing Agent

John Hille, Assistant County Attorney

Roger el Khoury, Director Facilities Management Department

Members of the Citizen Advisory Committee