

Coryell County Commissioner Facility Advisory Committee

I. Introduction

The Coryell County Commissioner Facility Advisory Committee (the Committee) was formed by the Coryell County Commissioners Court (Coryell County Judge – Roger Miller, Coryell County Commissioner Precinct 1 – Kyle Matthews, Coryell County Commissioner Precinct 2 – Daren Moore, Coryell County Commissioner Precinct 3 - Ryan Basham, and Coryell County Commissioner Precinct 4 – Ray Ashby). The members of the Committee are: Fred Chavez, Nancy Botkin, Bob Brown, and Matt Dossey (Lynn Massingill resigned his position on the Committee).

The charge given to the Committee by the Coryell County Commissioners Court was:

1. Explore and research facility needs of Coryell County based on current and future demographic projections for the county,
2. Develop a plan to address facility needs of Coryell County, and
3. Make a recommendation to the Commissioners Court with regards to Coryell County facilities.

The Committee felt the need to identify a *process* by which it should move forward with completing the task entrusted to it by the Coryell County Commissioner Court. The definitive goal of the Committee is to present to the *Tax Payers* of Coryell County the very best option for facility improvement to meet the needs of Coryell County Government offices and, ultimately, Coryell County residents doing business in those offices, while not burdening the tax payers with an unjustified or unnecessary debt service tax or increase in maintenance and operation tax. The process the Committee elected to pursue is as follows:

1. Visit with Coryell County citizens to establish the concerns and questions surrounding Coryell County facilities.
2. Gather and disaggregate information through face to face interviews with elected Coryell County Officials during weekly Committee meetings to discover:
 - a. History of Coryell County Government Facilities planning
 - b. Property(s) purchased by Coryell County for facility expansion
 - c. Prioritize the facility needs of Coryell County
3. Tour and walk through current Coryell County facilities to:
 - a. Understand the current condition and status of Coryell County Government Facilities
 - b. Validate or invalidate claims of unsuitable working conditions
 - c. Experience the working environment the employees of Coryell County are exposed to each and every day
4. Consult with architect to:
 - a. Explore construction costs of new facilities versus remodeling and renovation of existing facilities
 - b. Discuss pros and cons of new construction versus remodeling and renovation of existing facilities
 - c. Help create a long term vision based on previous experience with other Texas counties

5. Recommend to the Coryell County Commissioner Court a reasonable and attainable facility plan that stakeholders in Coryell County can support and have confidence their tax dollars are not being squandered on short term, quick fix solutions that will need to be re-visited in the very near future.

II. Discovery

The Committee utilized multiple means to conduct discovery work. There were face to face interviews conducted with Coryell County Officials, including: The Coryell County Judge, all of the Coryell County Commissioners, the Coryell County Attorney, the Coryell County Sherriff, the Coryell County District Attorney, Justice of the Peace Precincts 3 and 4 and their staffs, and the 52nd District Judge. The Committee also conversed with citizens of Coryell County to gauge their interest and view on Coryell County facilities, properties owned by Coryell County, and opinions of how to best move forward. The Committee utilized the insight and knowledge of Jeff Heffelfinger of Southwest Architects, Inc., as he and his firm have worked hand and hand with the Coryell County Commissioners Court to develop needs assessments, facility plans, and cost analysis for Coryell County.

The Committee discovered, through the various means of research, there are some glaring facility issues facing Coryell County. Some of the facility issues Coryell County is challenged with must be immediately addressed, while others can be part of a long range, multi-year plan.

The Committee was determined from the very onset to be driven by *data*, not popular *opinion*. The Committee determined it would develop priorities based on factual data collected to assist in making a well-informed, educated recommendation to the Coryell County Commissioner's Court. The open, respectful communication by committee members with each other, Coryell County Officials, citizens, and outside consultants made the process for developing priorities very efficient and enjoyable.

The Committee was specifically appointed to make recommendations on Coryell County facilities and will formally do so in carrying out the goal of this committee. However, in the discovery process the Committee also unveiled, what it believes to be, some very concerning issues facing the county with regards to management of current facilities by elected officials. The Committee believes lack of foresight by previous elected officials with regards to property and land purchase, planning for growth of the Coryell County population, updating technology so all Coryell County offices can communicate securely and effectively with each other, and not constructing Coryell County government buildings for a specific purpose to help the local government function safely and efficiently, but rather purchasing and re-purposing older existing structures, has now created a dire situation for Coryell County citizens and employees. The hope of the Committee is the current elected officials utilize the recommendations and support of Committee members to get the process started to rectify this situation.

III. Findings and Recommendations

The Committee has discovered there are three major areas of concern when examining Coryell County facilities. While there may be some varying opinions as to which is the greatest concern, the areas of concern to be discussed are valid and will undoubtedly need to be addressed. Obviously, the facility

needs of Coryell County will be prioritized with needs taking the highest of priorities and wants taking a back seat and part of a long range plan.

A. Short Term Goals and Immediate Needs to be Addressed (Now)

a. Justice of Peace, Constable, and Brand Inspector Building (Old Jail) and DPS and Game Warden Building (Poston Implement Building)

- i. These buildings have been deemed by the Committee as unsuitable to house elected Coryell County officials, as well as anybody else.
- ii. Concerns
 - 1. Structural
 - a. Exposed rebar above drop ceiling (Old Jail)
 - b. Severe water leaks in ceiling and flooding of building when it rains (Old Jail and Poston Implement Building)
 - c. Cracked walls and other settling issues (Old Jail and Poston Implement Building)
 - 2. Air Quality
 - a. Infestation of rats with fecal matter in ceiling tiles
 - b. Mold and mildew due to structural faults in design and damage
 - 3. Safety
 - a. County Employees lack the ability to have secured doors
 - b. County Employees lack adequate secured work stations with barriers between them and the general public
 - c. JP Courtroom lacks space to hold a jury trial and does not offer adequate space to have more than 5 – 10 people in the courtroom at one time
 - d. There is no secured parking for JP's, DPS, Constables, Game Warden, etc..., or staff

b. 440th District Courtroom

- i. The 440th was a second District Court in Coryell County and from the beginning has been placed in the old Powell Supply Building, currently known as the Coryell County Annex building.
- ii. This courtroom is physically not capable of:
 - 1. Providing adequate space for high profile jury cases
 - 2. Providing adequate safety for:
 - a. Judge
 - b. Courtroom Staff
 - c. Victims
 - d. Offenders
 - e. Attorneys
 - f. Witnesses
 - g. All others in the Courtroom
- iii. There are no expansion options for the courtroom, visitation rooms, judges chamber, or court staff
- iv. There is no secured parking for 440th Judge or court staff

B. Mid-Range Goals and Needs (2 to 3 Years)

a. Coryell County Jail

- i. Current Coryell County Jail can house 92 inmates
- ii. During COVID, Coryell County was 4th out of 254 Texas Counties on outsourcing inmates. (I believe we are currently at 5th)
- iii. Coryell County spent over \$1.8 million on sending inmates to other counties' jails.
- iv. The Coryell County Jail has received substandard reviews and been de-commissioned on four separate occasions by the Texas Jail Standards Commission
- v. The Coryell County Jail has ranged from having 240 inmates (During COVID) to 140 inmates (pre-COVID).
- vi. The Texas Jail Standards Commission recommends Coryell County having a minimum capacity to house 240 inmates by the year 2040.

C. Long Range Goals and Overall Increase in Safety and Efficiencies (8 – 10 Years)

a. All Purpose Government Building

- i. The various Coryell County Departments have a lack of communication between the multiple offices.
- ii. The re-purposed facilities which house the various departments have severe safety concerns, create a lack of government efficiency, and all lack proper storage of Coryell County records.
- iii. The offices to be included:
 1. 52nd District Court
 2. 440th District Court
 3. County Court at Law
 4. County Attorney
 5. District Attorney
 6. County Clerk
 7. District Clerk
 8. Juvenile Justice Probation
 9. Possibly Coryell County Tax Office
- iv. Secure Parking could be provided to Judges, District Attorney, County Attorney, and appropriate staff of those offices.
- v. This is a long term project to have a 10 to 15-year completion goal.
- vi. Allows for Commissioners Court, County Judge, County Auditor, and County Treasurer to move to the Coryell County Court House and utilize current Coryell County Court of Law (Judge Lee's Courtroom on first floor) to be utilized by Commissioners.
- vii. Current 52nd District Court could then be utilized by visiting judge as needed and allows for future expansion of a 3rd District Court if ever needed by Coryell County.
- viii. Utilize current Coryell County Annex site (Old Powell Supply Building) as parking.
- ix. Possibly move the Tax Office to the Extraco Building housing Coryell County Commissioners Court, Commissioners, County Judge, County Auditor, and County Treasurer.

IV. Summary and Conclusion

- a. The Committee believes there is a very natural progression to being able to achieve:
 - i. a more efficient, safer working environment for Coryell County Government employees,
 - ii. fulfill the role of each elected official, so as to create more accountability to the voters of Coryell County and eliminate excuses for poor performance, and
 - iii. construct facilities with a purpose in order to accomplish short term goals and stay in line with long term goals and overall vision
- b. The Committee makes the following recommendation with regards to Coryell County Facility Construction and Improvement:
 - i. Immediate (Now – 1 ½ Years)
 1. Construct a New Building that will house
 - a. Justice of Peace 3 & 4 and staff
 - b. Department of Public Safety Personnel
 - c. Constables
 - d. Game Warden
 - e. Brand Inspector
 - f. All Purpose Multi-Use Courtroom
 - i. Will be utilized by 440th in high profile cases
 - ii. JP's Court that require a jury
 - iii. Visiting District Judges
 2. Demo and Remove current JP's and Constable Building (Old Jail)
 3. Demo and Remove current DPS and Game Warden Building (Poston Implement Building)
 4. Utilize the services of current architect firm or do a RFQ to hire another firm to develop plans for JP, DPS, Constable, etc... building **and** begin drawings for 150-160 bed jail facility recommended in the Intermediate Phase of recommendation.
 5. Sell all Property West of Current DPS Building (Poston Implement Building). This includes Coryell CAD ID's:
 - a. 114029
 - b. 114040
 - c. 150893
 - ii. Intermediate ((2-3 Years)
 1. Construct a 150-160 Bed Jail Facility on FM 929
*** The Committee recommends utilizing the property on FM 929 after diligent research on utilizing the downtown area for expansion of the current jail. Economically the expansion of the current jail carried no savings to Coryell County Citizens. Logistically the expansion of the current jail created a nightmare for the downtown area with regards to relocating utilities, construction equipment traffic, relocating current inmate population, and purchasing two additional properties. The other issue that had to be addressed was if the current jail was expanded there would be no further room for future expansion. The County would

be landlocked once more with no viable option in the downtown area.

2. Building should be built for:
 - a. Easy and Efficient Expansion if/when the need arises
 - b. Adequate food service, laundry, and medical facilities for up to 350 capacity
 3. Develop a plan to utilize the current jail to:
 - a. Create a revenue stream for the Coryell County
 - i. Lease out beds to house inmates from other counties
 - ii. House inmates sentenced to TDCJ
 - iii. Lease facility to a third party (private) organization who would utilize the facility to house inmates
 - b. Or, Create a Female Offender unit to house:
 - i. In County Female Offenders
 - ii. Out of County Female Offenders
 - iii. Inmates sentenced to TDCJ
 - c. Or, remodel and create a Central Dispatch location for Coryell County.
- iii. Long Term (8-10 Years)
1. Coryell County Government Building
 - a. Locate on Old Gin Lot
 - b. Facility would house:
 - i. 52nd District Court
 - ii. 440th District Court
 - iii. County Court at Law
 - iv. County Attorney
 - v. District Attorney
 - vi. County Clerk
 - vii. District Clerk
 - viii. Juvenile Justice Probation
 - ix. Adult Probation
 - x. Possibly Coryell County Tax Office
 - c. Facility would provide:
 - i. Safety and Security
 - ii. Purposed Offices and Courtrooms
 - iii. County Efficiency in Operations
 - iv. Provide adequate resources for County Employees
 2. Demo and remove Coryell County Annex, which houses 440th District Court, District Attorney's Office, and Tax Offices
 3. Build additional parking on vacant lot where Coryell Annex Building was
 4. Sell Current County Attorney's Office location (Coryell CAD ID: 113824)
 5. Sell Current Juvenile Justice Probation Office location (Coryell CAD ID: 113792)

- 6. Sell Current Building next to Juvenile Justice Probation Office location (Coryell CAD ID: 113793)**
- iv. Other Recommendations and Notes from the Committee**
 - 1. Develop an 8 – 10 Year Facility Plan to be reviewed at least 2 times per year by the Commissioner’s Court**
 - a. Update progress toward fulfillment of the plan**
 - b. Make adjustments to the plan so as to keep the NEEDS of the Coryell County in the forefront**
 - c. Make public statement on progress towards fulfilling the long range plan each time the plan is addressed in Commissioner’s Court**
 - 2. Establish and Appoint a Facility Committee to assist with oversight and implementation of facility plan**
 - 3. Be very specific about building plans (Commissioner’s Court dictate needs and wants of the facilities for Coryell County, not an outside entity or architect)**
 - a. Specific Purpose of Facility**
 - b. Budget for Facility**
 - c. Type of Facility**
 - d. Configuration of the Facility**
 - e. Needs of the Facility**

The Committee wants to express its sincere gratitude to the Coryell County Commissioner's Court and Judge Roger Miller for allowing the members to work with each of you throughout this process. The Committee is very hopeful that the recommendations made will be considered and acted upon by the Commissioners Court and not simply cast aside and dismissed. The Committee does understand there are logistical issues that we sometimes are not privy to concerning certain situations, however, the time for gridlock to end and progress to build a better tomorrow for the citizens of Coryell County is now! The Committee is of unanimous opinion that too many years with of not having a shared vision, not five individual visions, for the future and direction of Coryell County have culminated in the citizens of Coryell County being left in a dire situation. We literally have Coryell County facilities falling down around our employees and little to nothing has been done to correct this problem for years. The lack of a shared vision has culminated with substandard facilities, many tax payer dollars spent on inexplicable land acquisition and property purchases, unnecessary remodeling projects, and overall inefficiency within the local government.

The belief of this Committee is it is past the time to put personal egos aside, and to develop and focus on a shared vision where the ultimate winners are the citizens of Coryell County! The failure to provide adequate facilities, purposed buildings, and needed resources to the employees and elected officials of Coryell County has created a readymade excuse for substandard performance and in turn hurt local government in Coryell County. By constructing purposed, durable facilities and providing adequate resources the citizens will be able to hold elected officials accountable and in turn, the elected officials can hold their respective department employees accountable.

The Committee is not throwing stones as we take responsibility for the lack of involvement on our end as tax paying citizens of Coryell County. Every citizen plays a vital role in helping Coryell County be a better place to live by being involved in local government and holding elected officials accountable to carry out the will of the people. Abraham Lincoln quoted John Wycliffe in the Gettysburg address when he said, '... that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.' The Committee believes the one area where each individual vote is still recognized and holds value and importance is at the local government level. We can all make a difference here and now in our local government, and share the responsibility to do so.

Again, thank you for allowing the Committee to serve and be a part of developing a recommendation for Coryell County Government facilities.