SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF PLUMAS

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

OFFICE OF COURT CONSTRUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

NEW QUINCY COURTHOUSE PROJECT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who owns the courthouse in Quincy?

The building is owned by the County of Plumas, and the County occupies a majority of the space. The Superior Court occupies about a quarter of the building.

The Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002 made the state responsible for court facilities statewide. Under the transfer agreement executed between Plumas County and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the County holds title to the Quincy Courthouse, and the AOC has responsibility for the space occupied by the Court.

What is the AOC?

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is the staff arm of the Judicial Council of California. The Judicial Council is the policymaking body for the California court system, including the trial courts, known as "Superior Courts," based in each county. Among other responsibilities, the AOC is primarily responsible for planning, acquisition, design, and construction of court facilities.

Why is a new courthouse needed?

The current building, constructed in 1921, is a significant town landmark, but no longer functions well as the main courthouse for the Superior Court. The Court's space in the building is overcrowded and does not meet modern operational and security requirements, and the space cannot be renovated or expanded. The court occupies a little over 7,000 square feet in the building, while a state study that applied current design standards indicated a need for nearly four times that amount of space.

For example, there is no jury assembly room, so jurors must often stand or utilize limited seating in the public halls until a courtroom is available. There is no room for a self-help center. The building lacks holding cells and secure, separate hallways for movement of in-custody defendants. The courthouse also lacks attorney-client meeting rooms, so attorneys confer with clients, victims, and witnesses in public waiting areas. The building lacks smoke detectors and sprinklers and is not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Who decides where the new courthouse will be located?

In deciding where to locate the new courthouse, the AOC will work closely with the Superior Court and with a Project Advisory Group, which will include a few community leaders who represent the business community, the legal community, the Sheriff, and local government (County/City). The AOC follows a standard site selection policy and process. The process involves objectively evaluating all potential sites and selecting at least two sites that meet agreed-upon criteria for the proposed new courthouse in providing access to justice for the Quincy area, within the confines of the project's budget and schedule.

The AOC and the Court will identify site selection criteria of greatest relevance and importance to the Court. The AOC will identify possible sites that meet the criteria; a local real estate broker has already been engaged to assist with this process. Then all site alternatives will be ranked against the criteria. The Presiding Judge will sign off on the site selection criteria and the preferred and alternate sites. The site selection must also be approved by the state Public Works Board. Site selection and acquisition typically take a year or more.

How many courtrooms will be in the new courthouse?

The proposed courthouse will include three courtrooms in 38,280 square feet.

Why is the County spending money on a new courthouse when there are so many other local needs and there is a state budget crisis?

The project is funded and managed by the state and not the County. The courts are a separate branch of government, now independent of the County administrative structure. We share the same building, the County collects court-imposed fees and fines, and we work together in many areas, but we are separate branches of government. The new courthouse will also be funded without reliance on the state's General Fund.

How is the new courthouse being funded?

The courthouse will be funded from statewide increases in court user fees, authorized by Senate Bill 1407, which passed in 2008. This bill approved the issuance of up to $5 billion in lease revenue bonds to fund this project and 40 others throughout the state, to be repaid by court fees, penalties, and assessments.

Will the local community have input regarding the courthouse project?

The Project Advisory Group will be the main source of ongoing community input to the project, but we understand that the public will have questions about it as well. The AOC will provide accurate and timely information throughout site selection, design, and construction: Updates will be posted to the California Courts Web site, and media advisories will be distributed at key

milestones. A public meeting on environmental issues will be held, and other public outreach will be conducted as needed.

Will the new courthouse provide space for any county departments?

The state funding for the new courthouse cannot be used on county facilities.

Will a new jail be located close to the new courthouse?

As the site selection process proceeds, the AOC and the Court may be able to identify and prioritize sites where adjacent space for a future jail may be possible, along with other important criteria. However, a new jail would be the county's responsibility.

Will the project hire local contractors and use local suppliers?

When the project is in architectural design, the state will select a construction manager (currently scheduled for 2012). The construction manager will perform local outreach to ensure that qualified local subcontractors and suppliers have the opportunity to bid on construction work when that phase nears. Construction is scheduled for fall 2013 through summer 2015.

Will the new courthouse be energy efficient?

Yes. All courthouse projects to be funded by SB 1407 are being designed to receive LEED Silver certification by the U.S. Green Building Council. This is a national standard for sustainable design, and energy efficiency is among its key criteria.

What will happen to the current courthouse when the new courthouse is completed?

The county owns the building, and any future use of the building will be determined by the County. The use of the historic courtroom on the third floor of the current courthouse may be negotiated between the Court and County.

For more information:
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/projects_quincy.htm

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