



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First of several ‘visioning’ sessions for new county courthouse held

Function and design input from county judges, magistrates, prosecutor and Sheriff’s Dept. will help shape new facility

Elkhart County, Indiana (January 27, 2021) – A three-hour visioning session for the new consolidated courts campus on Reliance Road in Goshen was held yesterday in the Elkhart County Commissioner’s conference room. The purpose of the session was to discuss shared values and goals for the 32-acre campus that will be located between the cities of Elkhart and Goshen.

Among the participants were Elkhart County judges, magistrates, the prosecutor and Sheriff’s offices, County Commissioners and other key leaders in county government. “There was a lot of enthusiasm for what this means for the citizens of Elkhart County,” said Suzie Weirick, President of the Elkhart County Commissioners, District 3. “After all these years, we’re finally getting it done.”

“Today’s participants are vital to building a well-functioning court system,” added, Frank Lucchese, Vice President of the Elkhart County Commissioners, District 1. “These are the people who spend more time than anyone else in the courts. They know how things work. And their input will help us build the kind of modern court system that Elkhart County will still be proud of a hundred years from today.”

“It was especially good to hear county magistrates and judges talking about making local citizens feel welcome in the new facility,” added Weirick. “Maybe it’s a Midwestern thing, but there was a lot of talk about the dignity and respect we owe local citizens. I couldn’t agree more. This is their court system. And, it’s why we wanted it in a central location.”

Another theme that emerged in the 3-hour session, was the importance of a robust digital ecosystem. The technology embedded in this new campus will facilitate easier, faster and better integration of all court processes.

Judges agreed that virtual court sessions will continue to be important as we move into a post Covid-19 world. Routine court appearances such as those for everyday traffic violations shouldn't require citizens to travel and take time off work anymore. Building virtual technology into the new facility will improve efficiency and access for all citizens in the county.

There was also general agreement that the new facility must be attractive. "What we heard is that this facility should not be a utilitarian box that's plunked down on 32 acres of highly visible land," added Weirick. "The judges in particular felt that the design should reflect the importance of this place – and that it should be timeless so that in fifty years, we're not embarrassed to look at it."

Additional visioning meetings will be held as the process of designing and constructing the new consolidated courts facility continues.

THE PUBLIC PROCESS

Elkhart County Government is committed to keeping constituents informed as the project moves forward. A website with frequently asked questions, key facts and an evolving timeline has been created as part of the process. The address is www.SmartCourtsProject.com.

ABOUT THE TRC (TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE)

Members of the Technical Review Committee include Frank Lucchese – Elkhart County Commissioner, David Hess – Elkhart County Council, Sean Holmes – Chief Deputy, Elkhart County Sheriff's Department, William Shepler P.E., DBIA – CEO, PMSI Consulting, Daniel Rawlins, RA, DBIA – Project Mgr., InterDesign.

ABOUT THE ELKHART COUNTY SMART COURTS PROJECT

The genesis of a consolidated Elkhart County Courthouse system goes back to 1992. The project has been discussed as a necessary improvement since that time.

Beginning in January 2018 and concluding in July of 2020, more than two dozen locations were studied by Elkhart County government as potential sites for the consolidated campus. The studies included sites in downtown Goshen and downtown Elkhart.

On September 12, 2020 an initial bond agreement was approved in the amount of \$35 million for the first phase in financing to purchase land, design and build the new courthouse.

On November 14, 2020, the Elkhart County Council unanimously approved the purchase of 32 acres of vacant property at 1905 Reliance Road in Goshen as the location for the new consolidated courts campus.

On December 9/10, 2020, the TRC interviewed 8 design/build teams. On December 15, 2020, the TRC narrowed the field of design/build teams down to three. The three finalists were interviewed a second time on January 12, 2021.

On January 12, 2021, the TRC interviewed three finalists for the project and assigned 16 Qualitative Scores to each design/build team. The TRC's Qualitative Scores were submitted to

the County Commissioners on the same day, and the Commissioners approved the submission unanimously at that time.

On January 19, 2021, Elkhart County Commissioners voted unanimously to hire Indianapolis-based design firm Performance Services and their partner Goshen-based Ancon Construction to design and build the new Consolidated Courts project on 32 acres at 1905 Reliance Road in Goshen.

On January 26, 2021, Elkhart County Commissioners hosted the first of several visioning sessions with participants who use the current county courts system on a daily basis. The three-hour session was designed to provide input on core values and objectives that will be used in the design process for the new consolidated courts system.

ABOUT ELKHART COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Elkhart County is governed by a board of three County Commissioners. The board of Commissioners constitutes the legislative body of the county for ordinance purposes and also serves as the executive branch for Elkhart County government.

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