

Grant County looks at district court remodel

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EPHRATA - Grant County is hiring an architect to finish plans for renovating the Grant County District Court building in Moses Lake.

The county is aiming to renovate the building, located on Wheeler Road, to make space for a third district court judge. The third judge position was approved by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Chris Gregoire in 2011. Once the bill was approved, the county had two years to fill the position.

The new judge is expected to help alleviate some of the case load the two judges and commissioner face at the moment, Judge Janis Whitener-Moberg said in a previous interview.

Whitener-Moberg along with District Court Administrator Barbara Smith and Judge Richard Fitterer met with the county commissioners recently to discuss a completed plan for how to renovate the district court building on Wheeler Road.

"I tell you, we're pretty thrilled with minimal work on the remodel," Whitener-Moberg said.

District Court is taking the space previously occupied by Grant County Emergency Management. They plan to move the entrance to the front of the building and set up a security and reception area, according to county records. A second courtroom is going to be constructed in the area where Emergency Management was.

"We're trying to come up with something with the least amount of remodeling and one of the biggest concerns has been the rest rooms," Whitener-Moberg said. "This looks like it will really flow nice. You come in (at the front entrance) there is reception and security."

The plans also call for changing the DUI/Drug Court Conference room into a jury multipurpose room.

The DUI/Drug Court program ended recently because funding from a grant ended, and the program wasn't continued, Smith said at the meeting.

The multipurpose room is used when people are reporting for jury duty, Whitener-Moberg said. All of the jury trials will be held in the Moses Lake facility.

The change will help prevent jurors and potential jurors from encountering defendants and attorneys, Whitener-Moberg said previously.

They also plan to increase the size of the clerk's office and add a vault next to the existing courtroom.

"(It will) give us a vault so we can keep all of our files in Moses Lake because right now they go back and forth," she said. "We're trying to eliminate dispatch, which is twice a day right now ... Right now, Moon Security runs files back and forth and money and all the stuff between the two offices."

Facilities and Maintenance Manager Royer DeChenne said laws require an architect to review the concept and formalize the plan since the building is more than 4,000 square feet.

"I think this flows really good," he said.

An architect will come up with an estimate for the cost of the remodel.