

Greene County Commission Briefing
Commission Office, 1443 N. Robberson
April 12, 2018
9:30 a.m.

Present: Bob Cirtin, Harold Bengsch, Lincoln Hough, Kate Morris, Jim Arnott, Dan Patterson, Paul Williams; and Harmony House, Victim Center, Community Partnership of the Ozark representatives, as well as several of the Prosecuting Attorney Office staff.

Commissioner Cirtin opened the meeting and introduced the sole action item, which was a discussion and possible vote on the location of the Family Justice Center. He said the prospective location was on the second floor of the Judicial Building.

Prosecuting Attorney Dan Patterson gave a slide presentation which included a video about a similar Family Justice Center in a different state.

Patterson said that in other states, successful Family Justice Centers are located inside courthouses. He listed the benefits, which included that it would be free, secure, and easily accessible to collaborating entities. Sheriff Arnott said security at such a center would be important, that there's no funding for such measures at another location, and the courthouse does already have security. Commissioner Bengsch inquired about a three-year time frame described for the location of the Family Justice Center on the second floor of the courthouse. It was explained that the sheriff admin staff would be moving from the courthouse to the future jail. Bengsch also noted that state funding could determine whether the construction of a new courtroom might be ordered. Commissioner Cirtin said that there is already a new courtroom available that is not yet in use. Patterson emphasized that the placement of the Family Justice Center is temporary until a permanent location is determined. Bengsch suggested that Patterson show the slide presentation to Court En Banc, but was told that Patterson had already attempted that but the Judges declined the offer.

Springfield Police Chief Paul Williams said that putting the Family Justice Center on the second floor of the courthouse was a good solution to get the project jump started and agreed with Patterson that this would only be temporary. Both Patterson and Williams stated that opening the Family Justice Center on the second floor as soon as possible would bring real public safety benefits. Arnott requested a vote, asking the Commission to consider the hundreds to thousands of people in the community supporting the establishment of this center.

Commissioner Hough expressed his support of the center, and asked if it had been asked of any of the collaborating entities to provide a space for it. Williams said no space has been offered, and that delaying the process any further while a permanent location is determined would be detrimental to the momentum of the project and the safety of the community.

Commissioner Cirtin moved to dedicate the vacant area of the second floor of the Judicial Courts Building to be used by the Family Justice Center on a temporary basis until an alternate location is contributed at no cost to the County. Commissioner Bengsch seconded the motion. The motion passed. Aye: Bengsch, Cirtin, Hough. Nay: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.