



PRESERVATION ASSOCIATES

21103 FM 179

Wolfforth, Texas 79382

Telephone: (806) 863-2462

Fax: 863-2479

10 Jun 10

RE: Dickens County Courthouse, Structural Evaluation

Dickens County Judge and Commissioners
Dickens, Texas

Greetings,

Introduction:

The long term future of the courthouse is a complicated issue that will take considerable reflection before a final course of action can be selected. The following remarks are intended to start those discussions and should not be construed as final recommendations.

Structural Report:

The structural engineer, Rick Miles with Sparks Engineering of Austin, Texas, has performed his inspection and submitted his report which is attached.

Unfortunately, he discovered that the structure is seriously compromised and requires immediate attention. The sagging 2nd floor joists, the warped roof rafters and the multiple wall cracks are the obvious evidence of this condition. We had hoped he would find that these conditions were localized failures of isolated structural members, but his investigation revealed a building-wide condition. His recommendation that the District Courtroom not be used belies his opinion of the seriousness of the situation.

Alternatives:

In light of this information, it seems the County could follow a number of different courses of action:

- build new facility and abandon existing,
- build remote courtroom and continue usage of office space and reduced 2nd floor activity,
- repair of existing,
- restoration.

Build new/abandon: There is approximately 10,000 sf in the existing building. A new courthouse on similar size would probably cost between \$2.5m and \$3.0m. All such funds would have to be locally generated.

Build remote courtroom/reduced usage of existing: There is approximately 3,000 sf in the existing 2nd floor courtroom. A new courtroom facility would cost \$750k to \$900k but would present operational challenges and would only postpone the inevitable (because the existing structure condition would continue to deteriorate). All such funds would have to be locally generated.

Repair existing: Repairing the structure would be quite intrusive and would require vacating the courthouse during the repair operation. Such a repair operation would most likely cost more than building new, possibly \$3.0m to \$3.5m. All such funds would have to be locally generated.

Restoration: Restoring the courthouse is an intriguing alternative because it involves utilizing significant non-local funds. This would most likely involve the construction of an annex building into which the courthouse offices would be temporarily located during restoration. Restoration would probably cost \$4.5m to \$5.5m plus \$600k for an annex building. The County's share of these costs would be \$1.3m to \$1.4m (15% of restoration plus the cost of the annex building). In addition to simply saving money, the County would reap the benefit of having a very distinctive courthouse and also the benefit of long term usage of additional overall space (by continued use of the annex building). Unfortunately, such restoration dollars will not be available for another 18 months.

Recommendation:

After considering the relative merits of the different options, we feel the most viable course of action would be to limit the use of the 2nd floor and continue to maintain the structure while waiting for the next grant-cycle of restoration funding.

If you have any questions, please give us a call.

Sincerely,



Joe P. Grimes, PE



Michael Peters, AIA