

## Commissioners' Corner: March 2010

Next month, Greene County will complete construction on the new Greene County Elections Center and Archives Expansion, on north Boonville. The 5,000-foot expansion doubles the size of our existing archives building and repairs a leaky roof and a crumbling floor— a bad combination for long-term document storage. The new Elections Center provides a much-needed training room for elections workers and secure storage for the county's 120 federally-mandated optical-scan voting machines.

The county is also designing a new, secure building for the Springfield-Greene County Emergency Management Office and the Springfield-Greene County Emergency 911 Center. Next year, we plan to build a new morgue.

The county will complete all of these projects without going to the voters for new funds — something that may be hard to believe. How can the county afford to build anything while sales tax and other revenues are down? Are we sacrificing county services in favor of bricks-and-mortar projects?

The answer, of course, is **no**.

In many ways, the county's budget is similar to your home finances. Our General Revenue fund is like your checking account, usable for everyday expenses like gas, utility bills, home maintenance. We use General Revenue for everyday expenses like payroll, insurance, utility bills, and building maintenance.

You may also have money that you can't use for everyday expenses — even when your checking account runs low. You wouldn't cash in a CD to buy gasoline, or tap into your 401(k) to pay for groceries. That money is dedicated to another usage.

Greene County, too, has funds dedicated to specific uses, including grants, allocations from the State and voter-approved taxes here in Greene County. All of these funds come with rules — often laws — detailing how you can and can't spend them. The county can't use Law Enforcement Sales Tax funds to buy a snowplow. That's not what voters approved. A juvenile delinquency prevention grant can't be used to hire a building inspector. We can only spend that money as allowed by the grant.

It is entirely through specific funds that Greene County is able to cover the Archives expansion during a tight budget year. This project includes **no** General Revenue funding.

Similarly, the future Emergency Management and 911 Center is being made possible utilizing specific sources of funding.

Today, Emergency Management is housed in a century-old former candy factory, prone to flooding and, due to its age and design, somewhat precarious. It is critical that we relocate emergency services in a modern, secure building. Greene County is moving

forward with plans for an \$18 million facility, utilizing federal grants and local 911 sales tax revenue. Because the federal grants come with deadlines, we must break ground on this building this year.

Grants and 911 funds won't cover this entire project, nor the morgue. The county will have to supplement these projects with General Revenue. We have a plan for this.

Since the 1990s, Greene County has dedicated an annual \$1.1 million in General Revenue to pay off bonds from the Greene County Justice Center and the Judicial Courts Facility, and from installing the county-wide 800-MhZ trunked radio system. These bonds will be completely repaid by 2015. Funds currently dedicated to debt retirement will be then available for other capital projects.

Moody's Investor Services recently confirmed a very favorable Aa-2 bond rating for Greene County, based on the county's 1-percent debt burden and the fact that the county borrows money so infrequently. This favorable rating places Greene County in an excellent position to bond future projects.

The Greene County Commission watches every penny the county spends, especially during what is, for all of us, a tough economy. But we cannot allow an economic slump to keep us from planning for future needs. By thinking creatively, combining funding sources, and taking advantage of every opportunity available, Greene County will continue to insure we meet the critical needs of our citizens.

**The Greene County Commission**

Dave Coonrod, Presiding Commissioner

Harold Bengsch, Associate Commissioner, District 1

Roseann Bentley, Associate Commissioner, District 2

## **Funding for Greene County construction projects**

### **Archives Expansion and Elections Center**

**Cost:** \$765,000

**Timeline:** open April 2010

**Funding sources:**

- Missouri Elections Services Fund
- Greene County Recorder's User Fund
- Federal Energy Efficiency Community Development Block Grant, available only for energy-efficient building features.
- NO General Revenue

### **Springfield-Greene County Emergency Management Office and Emergency 911 Call Center**

**Estimated cost:** \$18 million

**Timeline:** Break ground by late 2010

**Funding sources:**

- \$1 million FEMA grant for "hardening," or securing, the building
- \$1.1 million in US Department of Justice grants for special technology inside the building, and
- up to \$1 million a year in voter-approved 911 Sale Tax funds, used to build and equip a new Springfield-Greene County 911 call center. Over time, this will cover nearly half of the building's cost.
- \$300,000 Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant
- General Revenue freed up from previous bond issues

### **Greene County Morgue**

**Estimated Cost:** \$3 million

**Timeline:** begin construction in 2011

**Funding Sources:** General Revenue freed up from previous bond issues