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County selects energy contractor

Courthouse renovations to include windows, roof, heating and air conditioning

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Preliminary estimates show energy renovations at the Osage County Courthouse will cost around \$1 million. After receiving recommendations of energy conservation measures from four companies, the Osage County Commission agreed Monday to contract Trane Commercial Systems to develop a plan for the renovations and to determine financing options.

The commission's decision followed presentations of audit results by the four companies, including Trane, TAC Energy Solutions, Chevron Energy Solutions, and Custom Energy. Custom Energy had first presented their audit results Feb. 25, while the other companies met with commissioners March 14.

All the companies investigated energy conservation measures for the courthouse, the health department, road and bridge office and the sheriff's office.

During Monday's meeting, commissioners signed a letter of intent with Trane for the company to conduct a more detailed audit.

The commissioners first heard a preliminary estimate from Custom Energy of \$1.1 million for the project, but that estimate also included structural repairs at the health department. Custom Energy's estimate was similar to the other companies' estimates which ranged from \$849,000 to \$1.1 million.

Commissioners have indicated their primary focus of the work is to be at the courthouse, including new heating and air conditioning, window renovations and roof replacement.

All four companies recommended lighting upgrades and energy management systems at all the county's administrative buildings.

The energy audits were done under the state's Facility Conservation Improvement Program, designed to fund construction and renovation projects by reallocating budget funds currently being spent on utilities. The program is set up under the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) that provides administration of work, contracts, and established fees.

The projects are conducted by state-approved energy savings performance contractors, which guarantee the projected energy savings.

Trane's recommendations include replacing the courthouse roof with a membrane solar reflective coating that will save energy by reflecting light waves from the sun that heat up the current roof system.

The historical status of the courthouse has caused concern regarding replacement of the windows. Trane's recommendation is to remove the window air conditioners, repair the windows to their original appearance and install double-paned storm windows on the inside.

“This will maintain and not change the look of the existing windows from the outside,” Trane said in their report. Since the storm windows will cover the entire opening inside, “the look of the existing windows will also be maintained in the inside of the building.”

The storm windows will be installed to be removed for maintenance and cleaning.

The energy savings associated with the new windows include closing air leaks and reducing heat conduction caused by the existing single-pane glass.

The company recommended replacing the window air conditioning units with rooftop units. New ductwork will be installed from the units down through the building.

The deteriorating steam pipe heating system will be abandoned and the radiators left in place to maintain the historical value of the building, the company recommended.

The other companies offered different recommendations regarding the heating and cooling systems, one of which was to replace the old radiators with modern floor-standing heating and air conditioning units.

Other energy savings measures recommended by Trane include replacing fluorescent lamps with more efficient lamps and starters and adding occupancy sensors.

Trane’s report noted, “Some lighting is very ornate and add to the historical value of courthouse, and new lamps are recommended as direct replacement, but review of these lamps would have to be approved by the [Kansas State Historical Society].

Trane also suggested installing energy efficient control systems and low water usage fixtures.

“Turning off a piece of equipment saves 100 percent of the energy,” Trane’s report said.

Trane estimated the county’s energy savings at \$21,000 annually, similar to the other companies’ estimates. The company estimated the county would save \$2,000 in reduced operations and maintenance costs.

The company estimated that in addition to budgeted funds available due to energy savings, another \$57,500 annually would be required to fund the project. Trane’s estimate also included state and federal tax credits, and historic preservation tax incentives.

During Monday’s discussion, Trane representative Keven Ward told commissioners the project should be eligible for a lease-purchase agreement under a state law that allows such for energy conservation measures. Eligibility is determined by the KCC.

During the meeting, the commissioners also discussed renovations to the courtroom that has its own heating and air system. After Ward questioned whether diversion funds were to be used to fund that portion of the project, Osage County Commissioner Larry Woodson suggested that a meeting be held with the county attorney and district judge.

With the commissioners’ approval of the contract with Trane, Ward said the company would report back to the commission with a final audit by the end of April.