

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COUNTY SELECTS ARCHITECT; JAIL PROJECT MOVES FORWARD

During their February 25, 2010, Board Meeting, the Allegan County Board of Commissioners approved a fixed fee, \$1,140,000 contract for architectural and engineering services with a group of three firms, RQAW of Indianapolis, Byce & Associates of Kalamazoo, and OCBA, Inc. of Kalamazoo, to design a new county jail and sheriff department in the former Haworth facility and a sally port, security entrance, and repairs to retaining walls at the Courthouse.

In December 2009, the Board established a process that prioritized controlling the jail's long-term operational costs above the design expense. The design of the facility is a key factor in controlling long-term costs. The process considered the experience of the firm and the individuals assigned to the project, proposed work plan, as well as other factors. Board Chairman Casey Jones states, "Choosing a firm with the most experience will help us accomplish our goal of saving taxpayers money in the long-term."

According to Commissioner Max Thiele, "Over 30 years, 60% of this facility's total cost will come from operating it, ie, personnel, utilities, etc." Thiele continues, "It behooves us to go for the long haul in a design that can give maximum efficiencies. We have selected a team of proven firms to manage and design this facility with only that in mind."

Nine firms responded to the County's request for proposals. RQAW stood out with exemplary experience in jail design and a history of standing behind their work. The County believes that experience will result in a design that will help control the operational costs of the facility.

Sheriff Blaine Koops states, "The decision has been made and the Sheriff Department is excited about moving ahead." Koops continues, "We are looking forward to working with the chosen firm."

The County has already saved taxpayers over \$4M through recent decisions regarding the site and professional services. Jones states, "We are in a position to save the taxpayers much more on this project by having the right design and construction team in place." The purchase of the former Haworth plant in December 2009 provided the County with a unique asset for this project.

Commissioner Paul VanEck states, “We have an existing building and RQAW has an excellent history of working with existing building to design efficient and cost effective jails.”

“This project has really come together over the past six months” states Rob Sarro, County Administrator. He continues, “Through the Board’s leadership, we continue to make good decisions during these difficult times. We are further ahead in this project than ever before as a result.”

The next step in the process is to hold a design charrette which will likely take place by the end of the month.

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