



The following questions were submitted in the Avoyelles Journal to the editor on September 8, 2019.

The Answers by the Commissioners are as follows:

1.) Why was the vote set for November, not in the October general election? It sure seems someone was playing games with the populace here. If it was too late for the October ballot, was it an honest mistake?

The November election date was chosen because all tax propositions are historically scheduled for the second election. There are fewer competing elections and the public can focus on the issue of the tax proposal at the second election date. It is our opinion that the proposal has a better chance of success in the November election.

2.) Why did the newspaper use pictures of people fighting inside the courthouse and outside the courthouse?

We cannot answer why the newspapers used these pictures. It is indeed accurate, though, inasmuch as there are fights that occur both inside the courthouse and outside the courthouse on a more and more frequent basis.

3.) Will the new courthouse somehow make opposite sides 'happy' toward one another?

No. But the new Justice Center will provide both superior security and an opportunity for the court to separate the parties from each other. Now the design of the third floor guarantees an opportunity for confrontation without security and there is no easy way to separate the parties from each other, resulting in intimidation and increased security concerns.

4.) Please explain why the top floor of the existing courthouse cannot be used for bathrooms. And please don't speak of some lead paint or other thing that could be removed at a much less cost than \$9 million dollars.

The new justice facility solves more than just the bathroom situation. It provides security which the third floor cannot. It provides space for the anticipated third judge. It provides

access for the disabled and parking. The third floor cannot. The Justice Center provides space for all related court functions and offices.

Removal of the hazardous materials is only a part of the reason the fourth floor is impractical. Access is a huge problem: the current elevator shaft is out-of-plumb and it may never pass a new fire inspection. The existing stairs do not meet code and a second remote stair, meeting codes, would be needed along with another elevator from the third floor. The plumbing on the fourth floor is non-existent. The building as a whole is out of compliance with all existing building and safety codes. Any extensive renovation of the fourth floor would result in the requirement to bring the entire building up to code compliance. This will be very expensive and the question suggests that this will solve the security and access problems of the third floor, which it obviously will not

Additionally, the 4th floor would be even more of a fire trap than the 3rd floor currently is. If a fire breaks out on the first or second floors there are no means for escape by individuals on the 3rd floor, much less the 4th floor.

5.) Please explain why the front parking lot was taken away. Can't that parking lot be put back at much less cost than \$9 million?

The Police Jury made the decision to remove the front parking lot. It is estimated that this area would provide an additional 20 parking spaces. That with the current available 75 spaces in downtown Marksville results in 95 parking spaces. The Justice Center will have over 200 parking spaces. In addition, the access to the Justice Center over the five lane portion of Highway I is far superior to downtown Marksville. The activity at the Courthouse continues to increase with more criminal and civil trials being scheduled; the increased activity in the Permit Office bringing more people to the Courthouse; the increase in people for early voting; and the increased numbers of employees working in the Courthouse.

The lack of space for all concerned at the Courthouse has been an ongoing predicament. The District Attorney was forced to move his office from the Courthouse in the 1970s due to lack of space. The Sheriff was forced to move his jail and offices from the Courthouse in the 1970s due to lack of space.

