

THE WILBER REPUBLICAN

Project Sheds New Light on Courthouse Windows

By Tim Linscott
Republican Editor

Hurricane Irene did not reach Nebraska, but by the looks of the Saline County Courthouse, it appears a storm has passed through.

Windows have been boarded up on two levels of the courthouse and crews have been working at a fever-pitch to get windows to replace the wood in the frames.

The work is part of an overall project at the courthouse to make the nearly 100-year-old building more energy efficient.

Seventy-two windows at the courthouse will be replaced through this project. The windows will help reduce costs in energy, according to Emily Bausch of Southeast Nebraska Development District (SEND).

The windows will have an annual savings to the county of \$7,204. This equates to a 25 year payback on the project through saving on energy bills each month at the courthouse. The calculations on the payback through energy savings was done at the end of 2009 and the

beginning of 2010. However, because the windows will be far more efficient than believed before the project started, officials believe a 20 year payback is more appropriate of a figure.

The windows were initially installed in 1987 and through

years of wear and tear, cracks in the seals have made them not very energy efficient.

Some windows don't close properly, some have leaks that leave a noticeable draft or fog up easily.

"It will be nice having win-

dows that close and won't fog up every day," Linda Kastanek, Saline County Clerk, whose main office had all but one window boarded up late last

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Crews begin removing windows from the second floor of the courthouse as part of a replacement project.

Courthouse Windows

week, said.

"This will add to the appearance of the courthouse and the big thing is the energy savings we hope to experience from it," Willis Luedke, Saline County Commissioner, said.

The Saline County Commissioners were able to secure an EECBG (Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant) to help defer the cost of the project. The project will be reimbursed at 38.7 percent back to the county. Total cost of the project will be \$645,922, which includes replacing the original boiler system (which will be ad-

dressed in a future issue of the Republican).

Reimbursements to the county will be \$249,972, leaving \$395,950 as the county's share. The window portion of the project is \$445,922 with approximately \$200,000 for the boiler side of the project. (The boiler project will be in next week's issue).

The boiler side of the project is 80 percent done, leaving the majority of the work on the window side of the issue.

County officials indicated that the window project is actually two weeks behind schedule.

When windows were being replaced, it was noticed that the original steel frames were still in place. In order for the new windows to fit properly, the original frames need to be removed. County officials indicated that this has added an hour of labor per window frame and the original timetable of completion has now been pushed back. The original completion date was slated to be around Halloween, which is now around Thanksgiving.

The project must be completely done by Dec. 31, 2011, according to the grant.

A second hydraulic lift was delivered last week, which officials said should exponentially speed up the process.

Marcus Zettler, project manager, said the windows are a much needed boost to the courthouse and will have an immediate impact on the energy savings.

"It will definitely save some money for the county. You could put your finger through the holes in some of those windows," Zettler said.

Zettler explained that the original window and frames were installed in 1929 and

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were in service until 1987, a 57 lifespan.

The windows being taken out now were installed in 1987 and only had a lifespan of 26 years, which Zettler said was, 'not very good at all.'

He believes that the windows were not 'top of the line' and that coupled with how they were installed led to the early demise of the glass panes. The original 1929 window frames were not taken out in 1987 and the windows were modified to fit. Zettler said this weakened the structural integrity of the windows, leading to the problems at the courthouse and a need to be replaced.

"The windows were not closing properly because of the frames. Now that they will be properly installed, it will make them even more efficient," Zettler said, explaining why the payoff could be 20 years or less, instead of the 25 years as initially projected.

The majority of the windows are triple paned. Windows in the stairwells were once single paned windows, but now double paned will add to the efficiency movement of the courthouse.

With the windows being full height windows, more sunlight will be allowed to shine into individual offices, allowing for more savings on electricity.

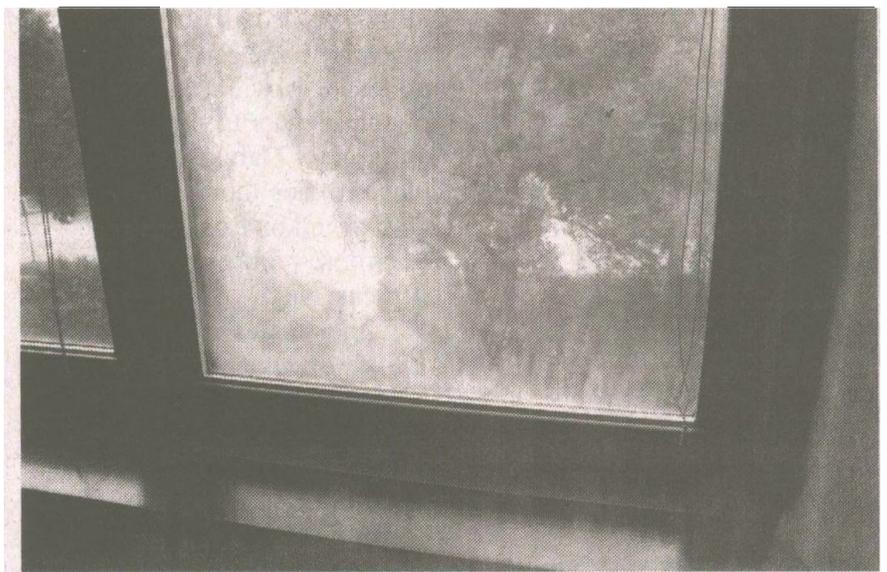
"That will, however, be determined by each individual office and their policies on those matters," Zettler said.

In order to qualify for the grant, according to county officials, the windows had to

go back to being closer to the original design. Since the building is on the National Historic Register, the windows must meet certain specifications, thus the taller windows. However, to meet energy efficiency specifications, the windows would be triple paned to meet those qualifications.

Financing for the project, according to Luedke, will be done on a lease purchase agreement. Ten years ago the county did a lighting, heating and air conditioning project via lease purchase and now that the agreement is about to expire a new agreement will begin for the boilers and windows. The agreement will be for five years (being completed in 2015) and will have the same amount each month dispensed as the previous lease purchase agreement.

"When we did the lights and heating and air conditioning at the courthouse, we did a 10-year lease purchase. Now that is paid off, we will pick up where that left off with this new agreement, it will have the same amount of money each month for the lease purchase," Luedke said.



This window fogged up regularly at the courthouse. According to the project manager of the window project at the courthouse, ill-fitting frames caused spaces in the windows, thus the fog.