

Tues. open house to celebrate remodeling

Written by April Peregoy



Nearly a year after construction began, the remodeling of the Phillips County Communications Center is finished. To commemorate the occasion, the County is holding an open house Tuesday, Jan. 27 from 1-3 p.m. for the public to view the new upgrades and changes.

The Communications Center project was completed in several phases, the first being the remodeling which was done by Marvin Einspahr Construction. It included the widening of the existing connection between the Center and the jail. The extra space that was created with the widening is occupied by a new, larger Sheriff's office and storage room.

The Victims' Assistance Office and patrol office were combined for patrol office use only. The Victims' Assistance Advocate office was moved into the old sheriff's office.

In the dispatch area, a new equipment room was created and the entrance lobby was moved to the east.

Once the remodeling was complete, the second phase of upgrading and installing new equipment in the dispatch center began. A new desk and 911 hardware/software system, plus an 800 MHz console, was installed. In addition, existing map data from the County Assessor's Office was converted for use by the Communications Center.

The ultimate goal will be to have the system identify the location of an emergency cell phone call as it comes into the dispatch center. The mapping center will continue to be kept up by the Assessor's office and utilized by Road and Bridge, Weed and Pest and Planning departments.

In addition, a new generator was installed to allow the entire facility to stay online in case of power outages.

Total cost of the project amounted to \$296,112. Approximately \$54,000 of the cost was provided by the county and \$75,000 by the 911 Authority Board. The county also secured a State Energy Impact Assistance Grant for the remaining \$167,112.

The Communications Center was first constructed in 1975 by Dale O'Neal Construction. It was connected to the west side of Phillips County Jail. It was originally intended to house the Sheriff, Undersheriff, Chief of Police, Town Patrolmen and the Dispatcher.

A dedication ceremony of the building took place Jan. 28, 1976 with then county commissioner Harold Colglazier acting as Master of Ceremonies. Doyle T. Johns, the District Attorney at the time, was the special guest speaker.

To pay for the construction cost of the building, the county used Revenue Sharing Funds amounting to \$38,630. A five bay garage, costing \$21,101 was paid for by East Phillips County Hospital District, Town of Holyoke, Phillips County and W.E. Heginbotham Trust.

The garage was built on the south side of Phillips County Jail to house the ambulances and Police Dept. vehicles.

The Town of Holyoke, East Phillips County Hospital District, Holyoke Rural Fire Protection District, Phillips County Telephone Company and Phillips County all shared in the cost of running the center until the early 1980s.

It then became the responsibility of Phillips County and the Town of Holyoke until the Police Dept. moved out of the building in 1997. Today, it is solely run and operated by the county.