



TENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF VIRGINIA
THE COURTHOUSE
FARMVILLE, VIRGINIA 23901

Donald C. Blessing
Chief Judge

P.O. BOX 351
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February 25, 2025

Derek Stamey, County Administrator
Cumberland County
P.O. Box 110
Cumberland, Virginia 23040
dstamey@cumberlandcounty.virginia.gov

Re: Courthouse Addition

Dear Derek,

Please extend my thanks to the Board of Supervisors for voting to seek RFPs for architectural services. The present "plan" is predicated on a drawing and estimate resulting from a study commissioned by Cumberland County. This gave stakeholders the opportunity to make known their needs and wishes for an addition. Competitive bidding should provide an experienced architect who can suggest multiple paths to comply with state standards.

I look forward to partnering with the Board (or its committee) to achieve a satisfactory adherence to those standards. Working together will save hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees (which can be used on this). Valuable insights can be gained and applied through discussion and civil disagreement.

Judges are restricted from certain forms of public speech. Nonetheless, I offered, after a brief meeting with the former Chairperson, to meet with all Board members (in appropriate settings). One member rejected this while all others agreed. No meeting occurred as all Board members should be treated the same.

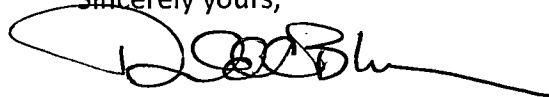
Had a meeting occurred, questions would have been answered such as:

1. The judges did not commit to any plan until no others were forthcoming.
2. The present drawing is a proposal and can be modified based on additional facts or alternatives if the goals are achieved.

3. The courthouse would be used more often if more court rooms were available and once the additional prosecutor(s) mandated by criminal discovery requirements become reality. Presently, multi-day trials in the circuit court prevent one or more of the district courts from meeting.
4. A sallyport is not parking for judges or building staff. It is for the safe and controlled passage of confined defendants to the existing holding cells. Presently they enter from a van(s) in proximity to the only entrance/exit to the Commonwealth Attorney's Office.
5. The Sheriff insisted on escorting me to and from the building after the relative of a defendant blocked my vehicle from leaving and waited for me to leave the building. A similar situation occurred in Prince Edward, and the Sheriff insisted on deputies following me home. Clerks, staff, and litigants have been escorted, when harassed, by deputies.
6. Secured parking can be as simple as fencing and fenced pathway to the entrance (compatible with the look of the building). All persons need to be safe and secure going to and from the building and while inside. Unfortunately, the building is difficult to defend as too many entrances and exits exist.
7. Use of existing offices may not be feasible due to the possible need for remediation of mildew or mold with dampness adversely impacting on important records and, possibly, the health of clerical staff.

Currently, "alternative means" are not necessary in view of the Board action. It appears that we can collaborate and exchange ideas (including additional options for solutions). I welcome this and look forward to it.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Blessing', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Donald C. Blessing, Chief Judge

c: Hon. Calvin S. Spencer, Jr., Chief Judge, General District Court
Hon. Marvin H. Dunkum Jr., Chief Judge, J&DR District Court