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By ROBERT PIERCE

- Daily Leader

With a new administration building in use and some of the county's departments moved out of their old home, this has left space in the Seward County Courthouse.

With this in mind, county officials, including commissioner C.J.

Wettstein, are looking to remodel the building for some of the county's other departments.

Wettstein said Wednesday plans are being drawn up by Steve Merz of Seward County Community College/Area Technical School, and the county is looking to get the project ready for bidding.

"What we're looking at doing is just re-bidding the project," he said. "We'll probably do the bathrooms as one bid and the rest of the remodeling as an alternate bid. We're anticipating that \$60,000 to \$75,000 ought to do it."

Wettstein said much of the remodel project could be in the former offices of the county appraiser and planning and zoning departments.

“That’d give us the nine offices, one secretary’s place, the two bathrooms, and that would let Cimarron Basin move into there,” he said. “If they need a classroom, we’re looking at the possibility of putting a door into the treasurer’s office just off the east set of doors where you come into the courthouse.”

Wettstein said a wall and a door could be put in the main hallway of the courthouse, which would close the rest of the building off for security.

He said he hopes to have plans back from Merz by the end of this week.

“If at the next meeting we could go in there and approve it to go out to bid, I would say we would probably need two to three weeks to do the bid,” he said. “There’s a possibility we could look at doing something in about two months.”

Wettstein said some work is also being looked at in the building’s bathrooms.

“We looked at relocation of the bathrooms from the original ones because on the original plans, they had the bathrooms further out, so we were going to have to break out more concrete flooring to come out,” he said. “We just looked at moving the bathrooms over to the northeast corner, and all we have to do is break out five or six feet of concrete, come out the side and tie into the sewer.”

Wettstein said this means instead of sawing out 20 feet of concrete four feet wide, that number could be reduced to five feet by four feet wide.

“We just set the two bathrooms there, and we just have our stools and sinks backed up to each other,” he said. “We take a lot less demolition.”

Wettstein said there are five existing offices in the courthouse that are working fine.

“So instead of actually demolishing all the walls and then rebuilding, we can just take and build not so many walls and have another four offices and keep our demolition to a minimum and keep our building to a minimum,” he said.

Wettstein said he believes the money used on the project is one of the most important things, and the remodel gives Cimarron Basin the offices it needs.

“Plus it’s all in that one end,” he said. “We can do the classroom in the existing space that’s in the treasurer’s office by just adding a door.”

Wettstein said, if nothing else, the county attorney’s office can come down the west side of the building to keep expansion cost to a minimum there and still have the space needed for that department.

“I’m anxious to kind of get it done and lined up and see how we come out on the deal,” he said. “If we can have a cost of remodeling of \$75,000 instead of \$250,000, then I think that’s well worth the time to look into it.”

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