

State agency to occupy Atchison Event Center

(KAIR)--A long planned relocation of state operations to the Atchison Event Center took a step forward during Monday's meeting of the Atchison City Commission.

The Department of Children and Families plans to locate a local office to the lower level of the city-owned facility.

Assistant City Manager Justin Pregont told the Commission that plan has been in the works for 2-years, and while it's unusual for the City to play the role of landlord, the projected funds to be generated through the use would help offset the facility's financial losses. "What we have here is a 15-year, lease proposal," Pregont said, explaining that, "[It would be] \$12.95 per square foot. That nets us about \$143,500 on an annual basis...we'd receive two \$71,000 payments throughout the course of the year."

The agency would occupy what is currently known as the Mercantile Ballroom on the lower level of the structure, meaning upfront costs for the City to see the necessary conversion happen. "We would issue bonds. They would be 15-year bonds. The annual payments on those would be about \$86,000. We expect to incur about \$12,000 in additional operating expenses at the facility as a result of this."

However, along with DCF, Pregont told the Commission a verbal agreement is also in place for a second, as yet unnamed state tenant, to occupy space following the renovation.

Following Pregont's presentation, the Commission voted to move forward with the plan, approving a near \$788,000 construction contract with Herner Construction, of St. Joseph, Missouri. \$50,000 is authorized to manage small change orders.

Asbestos abatement, heating and air conditioning modifications, and data cabling improvements up to \$125,000 is included.

The Commission voted 4 to 1 to approve the contract.

Commissioner Charlie Perdue cast the lone no vote after citing concerns of financial risks involved with the plan.