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Friday, June 27, 2008 Edition

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New library green lighted

By Jamie Carrick
Staff writer

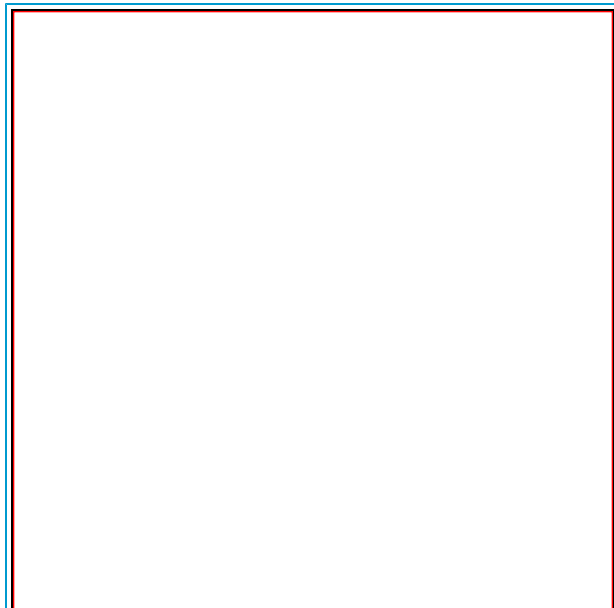
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The decision from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation is finally in: Durant will have a new library and community center. Trustees with the foundation awarded the city a grant in the amount of \$7,982,870 for the project.

Durant City Mayor Jerry Tomlinson made the announcement today at 9 a.m. to Durant and Bryan County citizens.

"We truly have been blessed in this process," Tomlinson said. "It's a great day for Durant and the county. It's a great time for the county."

Tomlinson and Billy Mickle, Donald W. Reynolds Community Center Initiative Grant chairman, gave a presentation to foundation trustees in Las Vegas, Nev., May 29.



Former senator Billy Mickle, who served as Donald W. Reynolds Community Center Initiative Grant chairman, shows off the design for the new community center building, which will have a total of 28,000 square feet.

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Symbol Lookup



Symbol	Value	Change	% Change
NSDQ	2313.55	-7.82	(-0.34%)
NYSE	8641.18	+0.44	(+0.01%)
S&P 500	1281.21	-1.94	(-0.15%)
AMEX	2207.49	-1.20	(-0.05%)
RUS 2K	698.15	-0.27	(-0.04%)
Crude Oil	141.69	+2.05	(+1.47%)
30YR Yield	4.52	-0.12	(-2.59%)

Quotes delayed at least 20 mins.

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"It truly has been a labor of love for many," said Tomlinson, who thanked all those who helped for their time and effort.



John Cathey, chair of the Durant Industrial Authority, which was also involved in the process, said, "It's been a long, hard drive, but we're here."

District No. 1 Commissioner Monty Montgomery thanked all of the city people involved in getting the grant and said the new library and community center will "benefit all Bryan County citizens."

Tomlinson said the planning process for a new library goes back 11 or 12 years and the new building will "probably be the most unique (building) in our quadrant of the state."

"It's impact will be far-reaching for many years to come," he said.

Mickle said, while he was in the senate, he raised \$1 million for the purchase of the land, 14th and Main streets. Then, about four years ago, Paul Buntz, former city manager, helped start the grant application process.

"If we didn't have the site, I'm not sure we'd have the grant right now," Buntz said. "The real winners of this are the city of Durant and Bryan County."

Buntz said the foundation will pay 100 percent of the construction costs for the project.

Tomlinson said features of the new community center and library will include distance learning, video conferencing and a black-box style theatre.

According to Fran Mickle, a member of the initiative grant committee, the new library will have 21,000 square feet. Next to it will be a 7,000-square foot community center. The Robert L. Williams Public Library has 9,500 square feet.

She said the new library would include a young adults' area, which would encourage reading and promote education in Bryan County.

Tomlinson said the current library, the Robert L. Williams Library, might become a small branch law library. Whatever purpose it serves, though, the city will "maintain the function and integrity of the (building's) original purpose."

Alice Moore, the director of the Robert L. Williams Library, who will retire soon, said the current library needs to be bigger, but she hates to see it moved.

"I know the reality of having to do something. We need more books and computer space," said Moore, who has been the director since 1985.

Fran Mickle said the city of Durant hired Reed Wood, construction advisor, to help plan and design the library, and the overall plans for the library include room for expansion.

"The city is committed to fully staff the library and community center. It will take twice (as many employees) as we have now," Durant City Manager James Dunegan said.

Dunegan recognized those who helped in the preparation and planning process, including former senator Billy Mickle.

"When you pay your dues, you get a reward, and, Sen. Mickle, we got a reward," Dunegan

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said.

Sen. Jay Paul Gumm expressed his excitement about the grant and the new library.

"It's a tremendous day in my home town. I lived in the library (as a child)," Gumm said. "It's time to take that to the next century.

"It sends a message that, 'You ain't seen anything yet,'" Gumm said.

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