

County requesting money

Funding needed for old city hall renovation, new building at WPCC

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The News Herald

MORGANTON – The Burke County Board of Commissioners approved, in a 3-2 decision Tuesday, to move one step closer to getting new office space in the old Morganton City Hall building and a new continuing education center at Western Piedmont Community College.

The approval authorizes the county finance director to send an applica-

tion of a financing agreement to the Local Government Commission for renovation improvements and furnishings for the old city hall's conversion into offices, meeting and parking spaces as well as for the construction of the continuing education building at WPCC.

All local funding has to be approved by the State Treasurer's Office.

If the agreement is approved, the county expects to increase property taxes by about 0.15 cents. County officials are asking to set up the funding in an installment contract the same way homeowners would fund home improvements.

The county believes the proposed

contract is necessary because of a shortage of available office space. The contract is preferable, officials say, because the county does not have the ability to authorize a non-voted general obligation bond and there is not enough time for the county to call for a bond referendum.

The government commission is expected to consider the applications the first week of June.

In other business, commissioners also unanimously approved to award the Lazarus building construction contract to Carolina Shelter Construction Company in the amount of \$1,472,900. The original bid was \$1.6

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million. The former department store, located on the corner of Green and Avery, will house county offices as well – a mere half block from the main county offices.

Carolina Shelter is using local sub-contractors for the building's plumbing, mechanical and electrical work. In a letter to County Manager Ron George, project architect Robert Salsbury said after extended discussions with officials at Carolina Shelter, certain aspects of the renovation had been modified which reduced the cost of the project.

Some of those changes were using fiberglass shingles instead of slate roofing, standard size elevator instead of custom size and modifying windows for brick rather than granite cladding. Modifications on the project also included using PVC waste piping under slab instead of cast iron, as well as a modified lighting package and fire alarm systems.