

Construction Underway for \$500,000 Staging Area/Morgue

Written by Debbie Gregory
Tuesday, January 21, 2014



Construction has started on the staging area/morgue that was a part of the Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$3,058,970, in a disaster recovery application following the 2008 tornado and 2010 flood.

When I talked with 911 Director Steve Jones last Thursday he described the new facility as a 50x100 foot structure, which is a 5,000 sq. ft. multiple purpose building. It is located behind the 911 Center next to the Macon County Justice Center on Highway 52 by Pass East in Lafayette.

“The facility is going to have several different parts to it including a maintenance area where equipment can be worked on and minor vehicle problems can be taken care of for the Sheriffs Office,” said Director Jones. “There is a wash bay where all the county vehicles can be washed and cleaned by the inmates, who do this work while they are incarcerated in the Macon County Jail.

“A section is set up for the maintenance person at the jail who doesn’t have an office anywhere and we found a location for him in the staging area,” said Jones. “We also have a storage facility for him to put everything it takes to maintain the justice center along with restrooms.”

Director Jones says there are other secured storage sections as well.

“The building will have a 12x12 walk in cooler and this is a temporary morgue area,” Director Jones explained. “We are continuing to get more and more people that have moved into our county that have family who live somewhere else and when someone dies there isn’t anywhere in the county to hold these individuals.”

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“If you are out on the scene you have to be able to transport loved ones somewhere they can be held until the proper notification is made. You also have to find out what funeral home or what town they need to be making arrangements to go to.”

The 911 Director said the funeral homes don't have anywhere to put them and it is an inconvenience to them. “We have actually had to take bodies to Sumner County and store them until we could find out what to do,” he added.

There are a lot of migrant workers in the county and unfortunately when something happens these bodies have to be held anywhere from 12 to 24 hours. “That's what the morgue is, a temporary hold facility, and it is a big part of the building.”

Then there is a section that has a large storing facility that will be used as a loading dock where a tractor trailer truck can back up to it and unload. “There are two large 12x12 doors where you can back equipment in and if the Sheriffs Office goes out and picks up something they have to seize and search, they will have a secured location they can put it in now,” noted Jones.

“So it is a multiple purpose building that we call a staging area because that's what we are doing, staging for a disaster. During the tornado disaster we had 18 bodies in the EMS bay that had to be processed and luckily we had a gentleman from the state to come up and process them for us. And then we had to get a refrigerated truck to come in and store the bodies until we could get them sent to the appropriate locations.”

Construction is underway and Jones said they hope to be in the building by May. “This is a 100% grant and all it is costing the county is the insurance and utilities. “It bid out for \$459,400. The building will cost around \$500,000 by the time we get it finished and it is equipped,” concluded 911 Director Steve Jones.

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