

# Polk County Board of Supervisors Office News



**Contact:** Sue Elliott, Project Manager  
Polk County Board of Supervisors  
(515) 286-3128

## **Polk County Board of Supervisors receive Fifth Judicial District Master Plan**

**DES MOINES, Iowa – May 20, 2013** — The Polk County Board of Supervisors received the Fifth Judicial District Master Plan from the National Center for State Courts and OPN Architects, Inc. at a special meeting this morning. Receipt of the master plan will provide the Supervisors with the information they need to move forward with a referendum on the courts space issue as early as November.

“The Board of Supervisors has listened to the concerns of the public since the failed referendum in 2008 and has advised the architects to take their concerns into consideration in the finalization of this master plan for the courts,” stated Board of Supervisors Chair Tom Hockensmith. The Courts Master Plan, outlined at today’s meeting proposes a phased approach to resolving the courts space issue which includes utilizing existing downtown buildings (the old main jail and Wellmark), moving court and County Attorney functions out of leased space, and provides for the renovation of the historic courthouse.

On April 29, 2008, a referendum to construct additional court space failed. The referendum considered a courthouse plan to address the current and future space needs of the courts. The plan included the full use and renovation of the historic courthouse and construction of a new court facility on County-owned land immediately south of the present courthouse site at a 2009 construction cost not to exceed \$127 million. By state law, Polk County is responsible to provide space for its state courts. Polk County’s Courthouse was originally built in 1906 with four courtrooms.

Following the defeated referendum, the Board of Supervisors directed the County Administrator to develop a phased approach plan and financial scenario to alleviate the courts space issue based upon the recommendations of the National Center for State Courts. A Phase I Study was completed in August of 2010 and included the establishment of a criminal courts annex within the old main jail.

####