

County Purchases New Building for Voting Center Across from Courthouse

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Macoupin County voters will have a new place to early vote in person starting in 2024, County Clerk Pete Duncan announced recently. The County has purchased an office building just across the street from the Courthouse in Carlinville that will serve as the Macoupin Voting Center.

Utilizing the grant the Election Office received as being named one of the ten Centers for Election Excellence nationwide, Duncan worked with the County Board to purchase the building without using any taxpayer dollars. The grant covered the costs of the purchase and will cover the necessary upgrades and renovations to the building. For example, a ramp will need to be installed for access to the main floor for better access to the public.

“I appreciate that the County Board agreed with me that using the Election Excellence grant, we should create a voting center as part of the Courthouse complex,” Duncan said. Voters who wish to vote early in person will now be able to utilize the parking right outside the building entrance, walk right in, and cast their ballot instead of trying to find parking around the Courthouse and going through the security entrance to get to the next floor up from the public entrance to vote.

But easier access to voting early isn't the only benefit the new voting center will provide. The voting tabulators used at each precinct have never had a good, secure home at the Courthouse, Duncan said. The new voting center has a lower level which will have a secure and inaccessible to the public storage room for voting tabulators. There will also be a separate and secure work area for the tabulators that observers who may wish to watch the process will have room to see testing. “Currently, our voting machines are being stored in a publicly accessible space of the Courthouse and when it is time to test or work on the machines, it's done in the middle of the Courthouse halls. I think everyone agrees that is not the security we need for them. Our new voting center will cure that problem and provide the much-needed security enhancement of our elections in Macoupin.”

And while some may think these issues weren't concerning, these problems have been raised in facilities use studies the County has conducted dating back to 2005. Independent consultant reports have cited issues such as “during early voting, the County Clerk is forced to set up voting and registration booths in the hallway. This does not provide privacy for voters and causes confusion as many times the hallway is also packed with people awaiting court,” and “...voting equipment are easily visible to the public throughout the building.” Recommendations in these reports include “fund the project with a combination of grants, private donations and county resources.” Duncan again stressed how pleased he was that the County Board and he had a grant to fund the solution to these long vexing problems for the Election office.

Duncan also stressed the Voting Center will have space for meetings, such as election judge trainings or meeting with local clerks for Consolidated Elections. The Regional Office of Education will also move its administrative offices to the building as part of an intergovernmental agreement that will welcome them into the Courthouse complex and help with the ongoing expenses of the building.

“Overall, this is a major plus for the County,” Duncan said. “Grant funding allowed us to secure a building in the county's name that will help cure issues the Election office has been dealing with for years. My office can't be more excited to welcome voters to the new Voting Center during the 2024 election.”