## Price quotes sought for new Mercer County building



**HAZEN STAR | DANIEL ARENS)** 

J2 Studios President James Devine presented a preliminary design for a new county building (the former A1 Auto Repair Building in Beulah) that could be used for housing various departments currently renting or leasing space in buildings owned by other entities. There are benefits to housing them together in a space the county would own, but also significant costs with purchasing and renovating the building to make this design a reality. The Mercer County Commission is still seeking further information before making a final decision about the proposal.

#### BY DANIEL ARENS HAZEN STAR EDITOR

While still far from a done deal, the Mercer County Commission expressed possible interest in the purchase and renovation of an old building in Beulah that could be used for county services in the future.

Currently, Mercer County pays rent for housing some of its offices and services in other buildings. Although the purchase and maintenance of a large building will be costly, commissioners said they were interested to see if those costs would justify owning a building as a county asset while relieving rental expense costs.

During their meeting Aug. 6, J2 Studios President James Devine presented a preliminary floorplan design to the commission of the "A1 Auto Repair Building," located at 712 County Road 21 in Beulah.

The design showed some spaces being entirely renovated and redone, while others would receive smaller updates. Departments included in the proposal as possibly being able to use the space are the Extension Service, Parole Office, Veterans Office, Youth Service Office, County Health Office, School Superintendent Office, Social Services Office, Weed Board Office and Mercer County Search & Rescue (using a large space on the northwest side of the building for storing their equipment).

In addition, there are conference rooms, storage rooms, mechanical and utility spaces, bathrooms and a couple of extra rooms in the proposal.

As far as costs go, the commission also has to consider not just if it plans to move ahead with the purchase but how it will be done if it does. The two options are to purchase the building as is and go out for bids on the remodeling or have the renovations done now (using J2 Studios and the specs that were presented) and then have the county purchase the property once the work is finished (incorporating those costs).

Devine said he did not have dollar amounts or estimates to present to the commission on Aug. 6. He said he wanted to show the preliminary design plan to give the commissioners a feel for how the space could be utilized, then see if the commissioners were interested in pursuing the idea further.

The commissioners generally expressed their interest in moving forward with the proposal, saying they were im-

**NEW BULIDING** 

ont. on pg!

# City readjusts website to provide easier access to building permits

#### **COMPILED BY RYAN SCHLEHUBER**

Businesses and residents looking for building permit information on the city of Beulah's website will now have easier access to them.

According to City Auditor Heather Ferebee, the city added a building permits prompt at the bottom of the homepage of its website, www.buelahnd.org, allowing residents and businesses to have easier access to building permit information, such as applications, zoning ordinances, permit and property information, land use plan and meeting minutes for the city's planning and zoning committee.

"We had residents looking for the building permit location and wanted to make it easier to locate," City Auditor Heather Ferebee said.

The website only allows four prompts to

be placed at the bottom of the website so the city's calendar prompt was removed to provide space for its building permits prompt, Ferebee explained. She said the online calendar was not being utilized and it had only listed council meetings.

"Council meetings are listed in other areas as they are set dates and times, anyway," she said. "We may add the calendar back if I can find an area to add it. Right now, it was more important to have the building permit link easy to find."

Notice of meetings are posted on the website, by going to "Meeting Notices & Council Minutes," which is one of the four prompts at the bottom of the website. The calendar is listed as one of the options to click on in the menu shown at the left side of the meetings page.

#### **WEBSITE**

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### **MUSIC**

events they host downtown," Akin said.

The CVB plans to install speakers on the rooftops from Country Kettle to the Main Bar on Main Street, which CVB Office Coordinator Robbin Brinkman received approval from the businesses to do so, according to Akin.

"With the range of speakers we'll have, you'll be able to hear from both sides of Main Street, from Napa to the laundromat," Akin said, pointing out important announcements could then be heard right away by those enjoying a holiday event.

Ward 2 Councilman Jason Isaak, concerned for residents who live in apartments near the area, asked if the speaker system will have a timer on it, which would shut off the feed to the system. Akin said system would, indeed, have a shut-off timer. Ward 1 Councilman Cam-eron Brown also asked if the outdoor sound would interfere with anything inside a busi-ness, which Akin said no.

"It's not blaring," she said. "It's just hearable from outside a business building."

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Akin said she is expecting the sound system to be in place before the next holiday season.

After receiving support for the speaker system, Akin told the board she hopes she, along with the CVB, can form a more healthy relationship between the two entities, which, in the recent past, has seen some debate, relating to an ongoing investigation being conducted by the North Dakota Attorney General's Office over alleged misuse of gaming funds.

"I know I'm new to this, but as far as I'm concerned, for now on, we all play for the same team, which is Beulah," Akin said. "Our city is in a really crucial time and I feel like the best chance to have success is for all of us to stand united as a front, work together and help each other make the city better. That's my goal."

Akin encouraged each city council member to approach her for any one-on-one conversa-tions and invited them to attend a CVB meeting.



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