

Statehouse renovations becoming a source of frustration in budget

TOPEKA — Frustration with the rising cost of renovating the Statehouse spilled into the Senate's debate Tuesday on the budget, with some members trying unsuccessfully to suspend the \$172 million project.

Conservative Republicans and some Democrats wanted to force the Department of Administration to renegotiate architectural and construction contracts, lock in a completion date and limit what the state will spend. Cost estimates have grown by \$37 million from the original estimate and are expected to rise more, and the work will last six months longer than initially expected.

Sen. Peggy Palmer offered an amendment to a proposed \$12.2 billion budget to prohibit the state from spending any money on the project until contracts are renegotiated and a spending limit set.

"It is irresponsible for us as legislators not to do something about it," said Palmer, R-Augusta. "You don't build a house this way."

But the vote was 21-18 against Palmer's amendment.

Other senators said early estimates of renovation costs were soft because workers couldn't anticipate all the problems they'd find,

with parts of the building more than 130 years old. Also, they said, all the issues Palmer raised have been discussed in open meetings of a special restoration committee.

Barry Greis, the Statehouse architect, said few of the Statehouse's design drawings remained, meaning workers couldn't predict what they would find when opening up ceilings or walls.

He also noted that legislators wanted to keep the building open and three-quarters occupied during the restoration.

Greis said the goal is to make the Statehouse a modern workplace but return it to looking as "the forefathers had designed and funded."

Senators gave first-round approval to three bills containing most of state government's spending for the fiscal year beginning July 1. Senators planned to take final action on the measures Wednesday.

The debate Tuesday gave senators a chance to discuss a wide variety of policy issues, including social services, reviewing state employees' use of government-issued credit cards and preventing state employees from using tax dollars to purchase alcohol.

Another issue was a backlog of building repairs on state university

campuses, estimated by the state Board of Regents at \$663 million.

Sen. Jim Barnett, R-Emporia, proposed an amendment to require universities to set aside 2.5 percent of their operating budgets for maintenance in fiscal 2009 and increase the amount in future years. But the vote was 23-16 against it, after some senators noted it wouldn't give the universities additional funds, only require them to trim money from their operations.

"The universities are already running on a tight budget," said Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dwayne Umbarger, R-Thayer.

Final versions of the budget bills will be written by House and Senate negotiators, and legislative leaders hope to pass them before lawmakers begin their spring break on April 4. Then, lawmakers will adopt one final budget bill after they return April 25 to wrap up their business for the year.

When legislators adjourn, the next budget is likely to be about \$12.4 billion, roughly the same size at the current one, though there will be big shifts in funding. The budget for fiscal 2008 will contain an increase in spending on public schools, in keeping with a plan approved last year, while spending on highway projects, which fluctuates from year to year, is expected to

drop by about 24 percent.

The Statehouse renovation is a relatively small part of the annual budget because the state is financing it with bonds. But as Palmer's amendment suggested, the total cost makes it a big frustration for some legislators.

When the project began in 2001, lawmakers thought they would be spending \$135 million, which included construction of a new underground parking garage, and they

thought the work would be done by October 2010. The completion date is now April 2011.

The garage has been finished, as has a renovation of the east wing, which houses the Senate chamber. Work on the west wing, which holds the House chamber, is under way.

Greis acknowledged the \$172 million figure will climb because it doesn't include money for a visitor's center in an expanded basement or repair of the building's

exterior stone.

Sen. Chris Steineger, D-Kansas City, predicted costs would climb to \$250 million, adding, "Our Capitol renovation is out of control."

But Senate President Steve Morris said Palmer's amendment could force the state to start the renovation over, under new conditions, which would be "counterproductive."

"This is the people's building," said Morris, R-Hugoton. "It's an icon for the state of Kansas."

Consultant sees need for bigger airport in Salina

SALINA (AP) — The Salina Municipal Airport could boost revenues by luring a fraction of the region's 255,000 air travelers flying out of airports in other cities, a consultant's report found.

Those quarter-million passengers are worth \$55 million in annual revenue, according to the 34-page report, which will be presented Wednesday at the Salina Airport Authority's monthly meeting.

Tim Rogers, executive director of the Salina Airport Authority, doesn't expect to attract all the potential travelers, who live in an area that stretches from just south of Newton and Hutchinson north to the Kansas-Nebraska line.

But he said attracting one-fourth, nearly 64,000 customers, is a reasonable goal.

"That's a significant number of passengers for a regional air carrier to seek a level of profitability," he said. "What that report has con-

firmed for me is that the Salina-Salina County air service market is significant."

The only commercial air service in Salina is Mesa Air Group.

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CARD OF THANKS

The family of Ralph Sondburg wishes to express their most sincere appreciation for all the help and support during his brief illness, all the expressions of sympathy, calls, cards, food, flowers, and memorial gifts. Words are not enough to express our appreciation to the community, friends, and relatives who offered their support.

Special thanks to Monument Birthday Club and Monument Mother's Club for the family dinner. A additional thanks to Pastor Bob Kelly for a lovely service, Margie Schoenfeld for performing beautifully, Oakley VFW and Ft. Riley for the Military Honors, Fairview Estates, Colby, for their continued help and support, L & C Home Health Care and Kennedy-Koster Funeral Home. Thank you all!

**Edith and Gale Schaffer
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Hays, KS Tuesday, March 27 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. DSNWK Eagle Business Plaza 2703 Hall, Suite 10	Colby, KS Wednesday, March 28 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. Colby Community College Student Union, Room 108 1255 S. Range Ave.	Salina, KS Thursday, March 29 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. Candlewood Suites 2650 Planet Ave.
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Refreshments served at all locations.

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Saturday, March 31, 2007

Doors open – 4:45 pm **Buffet dinner – 5:30 pm** **Live auction – 7:00 pm**

Colby Community College Endowment Foundation Scholarship Benefit Party Auction

Comfort Inn Convention Center – Colby, Kansas

LISTED BELOW ARE A FEW OF THE ITEMS DONATED:

- Grandfather Clock.....State Farm Insurance
- 5 Hamburger Deals & 5 Breakfast Deals..... Sonic
- (2) Buy one, Get one free passes.....KS Cosmosphere & Space Center
- Inflatable Raft w/ Accessories..... Colby Canvas
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- (2) Swivel Patio Chairs w/ Cushions..... True Value Hardware
- CPL Toolbox..... Colby Ag Center/Oakley Ag/Hoxie Imp.
- 120 Ac. of Sprayer Application..... Bartlett Grain
- 3000 Watt Generator..... Colby Imp/Oakley Imp
- \$100 Gift Certificate..... Colby Lumber
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- Cornay Western Print/Trouble Maker..... Darrell & Deanna Pabst
- Park bench.....Great Western Tire
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- 14kt Oval Sapphire & Diamond Earrings..... Stock Realty & Auction
- Large Framed Print..... The Loft
- Auto Detail..... MC Auto
- 2 - 50# Bundles of Ground Beef.....Hoxie Feedyard
- \$100 Gift Certificate..... Taco John's
- Chevrolet Jacket.....Taylor Motors

Lots more items not listed. Be watching for another list

Thank you to all the area individuals and businesses who donated items to help make the auction a success!

The CCC Endowment Association would like to thank everyone who helped orgnize the Auction, as well as all donors and buyers. Without you, our evening would not be a success.



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