

**GORDON COUNTY, GEORGIA  
MEMORANDUM**

To: Board of County Commissioners  
From: Randall Dowling, County Administrator  
Subject: Proposal to Provide Office Space for Federal and Local Agricultural Agencies  
(Update)  
Date: December 27, 2012

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**BACKGROUND**

Gordon County received notification from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) during June 2010 that USDA was going to solicit for offers from local property owners to provide 5,550 square feet of office space for the USDA Service Center since the current lease has expired.

The local USDA Service Center, which has been in Gordon County since the 1940s or 1950s, and is currently located at 717 S. Wall Street in privately owned office space of about 4,085 square feet since 1997, contains several federal agricultural agencies including:

**Farm Service Agency (FSA) - Farm Programs** – 3 employees and serves Gordon, Bartow, Murray, Whitfield, Pickens, Cherokee, and Cobb counties.

**Farm Service Agency (FSA) - Farm Loan Programs** – 3 employees and serves 22 counties in NW Georgia.

**Natural Resources Conservation Service** – 5 employees and serves Gordon, Bartow, Pickens, and Cherokee counties.

The federal government pays rent to the private owner of about \$61,275 per year.

A proposal was brought before the Board during the commission meeting of July 6, 2010 to determine if the Board wanted to submit an offer to USDA to construct a new county-owned facility to house not only the USDA Service Center but other agricultural agencies such as the local county Agricultural Extension Service (including the 4-H program and research staff) currently located on McDaniel Station Road and the Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission currently located in Rome. The purpose of housing many agricultural agencies under one roof was to have a one-stop facility for the convenience of the regional agricultural producers. The USDA and Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission (3 employees) would pay annual rent to the county for their office space but the Agriculture Extension Service (9 employee positions), currently housed in a state owned building with the county funding utilities and maintenance (\$13,000 annually), would not pay any rent. The Board approved this concept and decided to move forward with this project.

The county received the official Solicitation for Offers from USDA on August 5, 2010. The county, with considerable assistance from MDS, completed the lengthy proposal and submitted it to USDA on August 25, 2010. The Solicitation for Offers was amended by USDA three times (Oct. 5, 2010, Aug. 22, 2011, and May 28, 2012) and the county submitted the three amendments as requested. The Board discussed and approved this project again during the commission meeting on Sept. 27, 2011.

During September 2012, the county received email notification that USDA accepted the county's proposal and on October 23, 2012, the county received a lease agreement for execution. The lease agreement indicated the new facility must be substantially completed by Sept. 30, 2013. The Board approved that lease agreement during the meeting of November 6, 2012.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project would consist of the following:

**Land:** the county acquired 5 acres from the Development Authority for free on SR 53 Spur directly adjacent to the Northwest Georgia Livestock Pavilion.

**Building:** the new facility will be a total not to exceed 12,963 square feet of which 4,260 square feet will be allocated to the USDA and the remaining 8,703 square feet will be allocated to the local Agricultural Extension Service, the Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission, and a 2,200 square foot/300 person auditorium for public use.

**Cost:** the new facility's cost estimate is \$2,500,000 to build and \$45,000 to maintain every year (utilities, maintenance, grass cutting, insurance, etc.).

**Financing:** the new facility could be financed with existing county funds.

**Lease Terms:** the USDA lease agreement has a 10 year lease term but can be terminated at any time with a 120 day written notice, which is customary for federal leases. The Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission would have a year to year lease, which is customary for state leases.

**Annual Rent Payments:** The USDA would pay the county \$61,258.80 annually for rent that will go toward debt payments and \$15,336.00 annually for utilities for a total annual payment of \$76,594.80. The Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission would pay the county \$8,100 per year for rent that will go toward debt payments. The county would pay the balance for the Agricultural Extension Service portion. When the debt is paid in full, the county would own the building and the USDA and Georgia Soil & Water Commission would continue to pay rent.

### Annual Payments Detailed by Jurisdiction (county financed for 20 years at 0.0%)

Jurisdiction	Annual Rent Payment	Annual Utility & Maintenance Payment	Total
USDA	\$61,258.80	\$15,336.00	\$76,594.80
GA Soil & Water Comm.	8,100.00	0.00	8,100.00
Gordon County	55,641.20	29,664.00	85,305.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$125,000.00 / \$2,500,000 for 20 years</b>	<b>\$45,000.00</b>	<b>\$170,000.00</b>

**Project Benefits:** All regional agriculture producers are currently traveling to at least three different locations to transact their business - USDA Service Center on S. Wall St., Agricultural Extension Service on McDaniel Station Road, and Soil & Water Commission in Rome. This new one-stop facility that would be located directly adjacent to the Livestock Pavilion would be very convenient for the agricultural producers and would attract new and more agricultural related seminars, shows, and regional meetings. In addition, the 300 person auditorium would be available to the public for rentals. The existing Extension Service building, owned by the Georgia Board of Regents, would be available to the county for any county purpose.

## **REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ) PROCESS**

County staff prepared a RFQ to solicit qualifications from interested companies to design and build the new agricultural service center. The RFQ was distributed on November 12, 2012 and seven responses were received on the deadline date of December 13, 2012. The selection committee evaluated the seven responses and narrowed them down to the top three on December 17. The top three companies were interviewed by the selection committee on December 20. The selection committee chose Lusk & Company, Inc. to design and build the new facility. Their agreement is attached.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Board authorize the Chairman to execute the agreement between the county and Lusk & Company, Inc. to design and build the new agricultural service center in accordance with the information contained within the agreement.

Attachment: 1) AIA Agreement