

A long-range planning guide available to Moore County Commissioners for the first time puts a pricetag on converting the courthouse in Carthage into the seat of government. A team of consultants says conversion of the 48, 000 square foot courthouse would cost an estimated five-million dollars. Keep in mind a proposal advanced earlier for a new government office building as part of a larger complex in Mid-town Carthage was expected to twice that. By way of comparison, the square foot cost of modern buildings from the ground up is in excess of \$200.00 a square foot. The courthouse renovation, according to the study, would cost \$85.00 a square foot. Two years ago Commissioner Larry Caddell let it be known that the county had reserved space next to the 27-million dollar public safety and detention facility scheduled for completion this fall in Carthage. That assurance surely pleased Superior Court Judge James Webb. It was Webb who led the fight to replace the 35-year-old courthouse, arguing that it was obsolete. Furthermore, said Webb at the time, its very obsolescence accounted for a backlog of cases that numbered in the thousands. Webb's Intervention, it is believed, convinced lawmakers to take a fresh look at their building needs allocation. In any event, the conversion of the courthouse into a government office building is at least three years away. That's how long it would take to design and build a new judicial center.