



Inland News

San Jacinto's new centralized City Hall complex opens Monday



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08:20 AM PST on Wednesday, January 30, 2008

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The Press-Enterprise

SAN JACINTO - City Hall will cease to exist Friday as a patchwork of offices along Main Street and will reopen Monday in a modern \$2.7-million complex on the northeast corner of San Jacinto Avenue and Sixth Street.

City Manager Barry McClellan said the historic Virginia Lee Hotel, which houses most City Hall offices, and the City Clerk's office will be closed all day Friday. Residents can pay utility bills in the Finance Department annex at 322 E. Main St. until noon.

All City Hall operations will resume at 12:30 p.m. Monday in the new City Hall at 595 S. San Jacinto Ave.

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City Manager Barry McClellan says San Jacinto's new City Hall will improve service to the public by consolidating city departments into two buildings at 595 S. San Jacinto Ave. The \$2.7-million facility, is scheduled to open to the public Monday.

"We're moving over the weekend to minimize any inconvenience to the community," McClellan said. "We have to close for a day-and-a-half to the public, but, hey, we move only once every 50 years.

"The movers will take our stuff over on Saturday and Sunday to our work stations. When our people come to work Monday morning, everything will be there so they can unpack and put the stuff in their files and desks."

McClellan said he expects all computers and telephones to be operating Monday. They will be delivered over the weekend and hooked up to the new work stations by Riverside County technicians.

San Jacinto officials began negotiating in mid-2007 with Hacienda Heights developer Jim Handley to buy the parcel, which is about three-quarters of an acre, and two buildings while they were still under construction. The site originally was earmarked for new medical offices. The city used developer-agreement money it had been saving to purchase the property and make improvements.

The city administration has been operating out of the Virginia Lee Hotel at 248 E. Main St. since the former City Hall at 201 Main St. was declared seismically unsafe in 2005. San Jacinto also has been leasing space half-a-block east on Main Street for its Finance Department, as well as a half-block in the opposite direction for the City Clerk's office.

"Right now we're spread out over four facilities," McClellan said. "People who come in for the Planning Department or building permits go to two different places at the Virginia Lee, plus the building inspectors are in a modular building behind here. Now, they'll all be in the same place."

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Steve Fetbrandt / The Press-Enterprise
San Jacinto City Manager Barry McClellan checks progress inside the new City Hall. Officials have worked out of the Virginia Lee Hotel since the former City Hall was declared seismically unsafe in 2005.

The move will bring 52 city workers and all City Hall functions under two roofs on the same property. Employees will move from about 8,000 square feet into 10,600 square feet of space.

The 6,000-square-foot main building will house the city manager, human resources and building, planning and redevelopment functions. Visitors will find a large central counter for planning and building services. Non-public areas will contain offices for department managers.

The smaller, 4,600-square-foot building across the driveway/entrance to the gated parking lot will house the City Clerk's office and Finance Department, where residents can make utility payments or have utility service started. Employees will conduct business through glass cages for additional security, McClellan said.

"All of this is going to be a tremendous improvement for everybody," he said. "Our efficiency is going to be so much better having all of these work spaces and more building area. Plus, everybody is going to feel so much better about their work environment because they're working in nice, new facilities."

Workers were putting finishing touches on the project this week, installing work-space partitions and setting up modular office furniture.

"It's not all leather chairs and easy chairs," McClellan said, "but it's very attractive."

McClellan said city officials plan on being in the new complex at least 10 years and, possibly, up to 20.

"The city is going to continue to grow and need more space. But for now, the City Council certainly wants to remain downtown," he said.

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