

Washington KAN STEP: fire and EMS facility is now in service

For the residents of Washington, Kansas March 2003 was the month a great deal of planning, dreaming and community collaboration came to fruition. It was when the Kansas Department of Commerce awarded the city a KAN STEP grant in the amount of \$347,614 for construction of a new fire and EMS facility. The funding was coupled with \$233,140 in local contributions that would be raised through donated labor and services.

“I speak for our entire community when I say we are truly thankful for Department of Commerce funding, KRWA, Regional Planning and Donnie Marrs for helping us build it,” said Washington Mayor Travis Kier. “Our old fire house was just horrible! It had no bathrooms, no

*Pete Koenig
KAN STEP Tech*



heating system, no training rooms – the need was genuine.”

Project leadership

Each KAN STEP project has a “sparkplug,” the title given to the project’s official organizer, scheduler, leader and cheerleader.

Washington’s sparkplug was City Administrator Tim Schook.

“A couple of years back, community volunteers organized to build a unique playground construction called ‘Munchkin Land’ in our city park. That town endeavor gave me confidence that our community’s volunteers could make the EMS/Fire barn a very successful project,” said Tim.

Getting started

With funding approved and professional services contracted, the construction could begin. The

the Kansas Rural Water Association.

The needs of the community come first in designing a KAN

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project wouldn’t actually kick-off with digging footings and pouring cement, but instead, planning meetings and consultations with a professional architectural firm to design the facility was the first order of business.

Professional services contracted for Washington’s project included the architectural and design talents of Donnie



Left: The first steps are some of the toughest. The first major task is pouring the 763 cubic yards of concrete in the building’s floor. Volunteers pull concrete ahead of the power screed.



Above: The next step was to erect the steel frame structure. Here, volunteers fasten side columns and supports.

Marrs, DMA Architects, Salina; grant administration expertise of John Cyr, executive director of the North Central Regional Planning Commission; and inspection and technical assistance provided by

Right: Munchkin Land at Washington City Park was the “come together” project that convinced city volunteers to tackle the EMS/Fire Barn.



STEP project; architect Donnie Marrs did just that. John Cyr's patience and organizational skills coupled with an outstanding staff helped ensure the project's administrative details were taken care of promptly and accurately. Keeping bills paid and fund allocations correctly logged is critical. KRWA KAN STEP staffers' years of experience in a variety of building trades were utilized to provide construction management, essential tools and

assistance for the construction of what proved to be a very large project.

Planning initiated environmental inspections at the proposed site. Advertisements for bids were

There have been no crushed fingers, no broken bones or twisted metal; this stellar safety record is a great part of the Washington project story.

When architect Donnie Marrs and the core committee revised and finalized project plans, John Cyr and North Central Regional

placed in area newspapers. Local editors were contacted and press releases sent to explain how the new KAN STEP process worked.



Above: Mayor Travis Kier and City Administrator Tim Schook standing in front of the finished cabinets in the kitchen.

Right & Below: Installing tin and insulation is labor intensive, utilizing equipment large and small.



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North Central Regional Planning took care of these details and much more, making the entire process go smoothly.

After material bids were accepted and contracts prepared, volunteer construction planning was finalized enough to actually start work on the new steel building. Some believe steel building construction is a “snap” because everything is “made to fit.” However, more preparation is involved in a steel building because its construction requires a more detailed level of finish work. Many contractors are aware of this and really sharpen their pencils when developing steel building bids for these and other reasons, including safety. A 16-foot 2 x 4 weighs a lot less than a 16-foot steel I-beam – a whole lot less!

On December 2, 2003 KRWA’s Shane Holthaus, KAN STEP tech, and Elmer Ronnebaum, general manager, attended a pre-construction meeting in Washington. They were impressed

“Local civic groups not only provided volunteer numbers, but kept us well fed, bringing plenty of homemade meals and sweets – we never had a bad meal!”

– Washington City Administrator Tim Schook

with the organization and leadership demonstrated by Tim Schook at the meeting. “It was evident that those in attendance were there because of the skills they possessed and were able to take leadership responsibilities in

different aspects of the project for very good reason,” Elmer observed.

Charlie Walters, an experienced concrete contractor, made a recommendation that construction wait until the ground thawed in late March or early April to begin



Denise Powell, Washington city clerk, works at staining cabinet doors for the kitchen. Several coats of sealer and varnish were then applied before the cabinetry was assembled and installed.



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pouring. This would allow for a savings of many man-hours that otherwise would be required to insulate a floor poured during winter months, not to mention the headache of pouring and finishing a slab wearing insulated coveralls. Although waiting three to four months could put a strain on completing the project in the Department of Commerce’s allotted two-year time-frame, it was agreed that this was sound advice.

On April 17, 2004 the first of several concrete pours was made. When they were finished volunteers started erecting the building’s steel frame. Construction went smoothly with no injuries, a main concern of the KAN STEP inspectors. There have been no crushed fingers, no broken bones or twisted metal; this stellar safety record is a great part of the Washington project story. With the frame in place, insulation

and tin followed. The experience and teamwork of the Washington volunteers was evident as the new building was quickly “skinned in,” getting the crew inside and out of the weather.

Working inside, work groups became smaller and more specialized and the pace slowed as more tedious and detailed types of construction work began. At this point, workers sometimes have to



Rachel Zabokrtsky pulls steel reinforcement up into the wet concrete. One of the teenage project volunteers, Rachel accompanied her father Dan along with some 30 others on the labor intensive concrete day.

be more imaginative because all utilities and fixtures in a steel building are visible to anyone walking through. Not only do utility segments and fixtures need to look good but they have to be unobtrusive. Water lines and electrical conduit cannot be in the way of vehicles and gear racks.

Everyone’s construction experience helped speed the process, even after waiting all winter to start pouring concrete. The inside of the building quickly took shape. It turned out as clean and professional looking as the outside. Huge exhaust fans, louvered vents, overhead door openers and metal staircases, were some of the diverse but complicated portions of the

building’s interior that were completed with as much care and professionalism by volunteer workers at Washington as could normally be expected from a full-time commercial contractor.

Not only did Washington’s 80 x 160-foot steel building have open bays that needed an industrial style of finishing, but also office, kitchen and training rooms in need of a more homey look – quite a range of décor! This meant installation of sheet rock, ceiling tile and finishing woodwork trim. While one or two volunteers worked in the truck bays wiring or welding, other teams would work in the office area framing, building walls, finishing sheet rock or trim, and painting.

It takes a little ingenuity to couple wood, steel and concrete block construction into an attractive and functional unit. The Washington volunteers welcomed the challenge with open arms and did an outstanding job. It was apparent that the volunteers each understood the significance of being part of a facility that would serve present and future generations. Their workmanship was top-notch.

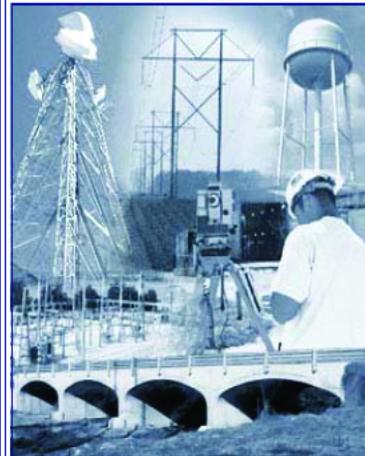
With most of the interior completed and the rest of the finish work coming along as planned, it was time to pour the approach and driveway around the building. With the help of Charlie Walters, the volunteers poured the remaining areas without a problem.

One of the last things to be installed was kitchen cabinetry that was designed and constructed on-site. The cabinetmaker crew set up shop in one of the EMS bays and completed construction of beautiful cabinets with no compromise to detail.

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A total of 11,888 work hours was donated by over 125 city volunteers. The project's 'Core Planning Group' included representatives from fire, EMS, two city council members and city administrator. Tim Schook also had the 'Die-Hard Six,' a group of very dedicated workers who were at the

provided volunteer numbers, but kept us well fed, bringing plenty of homemade meals and sweets – we never had a bad meal," Tim exclaimed! It was also common to see quite a few young people helping on a regular basis. "The teenagers really took pride in seeing the project's progress. Many

volunteers, young and old, learned a great deal about construction, taking home new skills as well as pride in volunteering," Tim added.

After the last coat of paint was applied, the last bolt snugged-up, and the last light bulb tightened, it was finally time for a little

State Representative Sharon Schwartz, Washington, and State of Kansas Ambulance Services Director David Lake.

"The new facility will easily serve community needs for the next 40 years. The building has space to provide live-in fire-house capabilities that might be needed in the future. Now we can provide for essential training needs of city personnel – right here in Washington," an exuberant Mayor Kier reported. "I am so proud of our community. It's quite a long process from planning to completion – it takes an entire town to keep a volunteer endeavor like this going and a town like Washington growing."

Additional photos of the Washington KAN STEP project and those of other ongoing projects can be found on KRWA's web site at www.krwa.net. There's a direct link to KAN STEP projects in the center of the home page.

For more information on the Kansas Department of Commerce non-competitive, open cycle community grants, contact Becky R. Kester, Economic Development Representative, Kansas Department of Commerce, 1000 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 100, Topeka Kansas 66612-1354, phone: (785) 296-3590, fax: (785) 296-3776, TTY (Hearing Impaired): (785) 296-3487 or e-mail: bkester@kansascommerce.com.

WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS PHOTO - DAN THALMAN



Cutting the ribbon and officially opening the new Washington KAN STEP facility at the April 23rd BBQ were: L to r, City Clerk Denise Powell, State Representative Sharon Schwartz, Council Member Tom Dragastin, Council Member Jon Snapp, Council Member Meyler Gibbs, Council Member Dawn Kramer, EMS Director Leland Cook, KDOC Representative Becky Kester, City Administrator Tim Schook, Mayor Travis Kier, RFD 9 Fire Chief Jerry Alldredge and Washington EMT Caroline Yungeberg. Washington City Fire Chief Delwin Wiemers is not in pictured due to work.

site working from start to finish. The project crew chiefs, all in the construction business, were each in charge of a technical aspect of the construction. They were also very generous with their time.

"During high volume work weekends, 30 to 40 volunteers would show up for chores like cement pours and tin installation. Local civic groups not only

recognition. An appreciation BBQ and open house was planned and held on April 23, 2005. On that Saturday afternoon, Tim Schook and most of the volunteers were present to receive the appreciation of more than 100 community members. VIPs attending the gala included Washington Mayor Travis Kier, Becky Kester of the Kansas Department of Commerce,

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