

mammoth

The Mono County court house in Mammoth Lakes used to be here – a tiny rented space right above a sushi restaurant in a strip mall. After breaking ground in May 2010, fast forward 16 months. Working quickly through the winter under the direction of the Administrative Office of the Courts – the brand new courthouse was completed on time and about a million dollars under budget.

At the dedication ceremony, Presiding Judge Stan Eller explained how the Branch financed the 20,000 square foot building.

Hon. Stan Eller, Presiding Judge, Mono Superior Court “Because of prudence and foresight the courthouse construction fund that paid for our courthouse was established years ago. Money was set aside exactly for this purpose. Money did not come from the general fund.”

The new courthouse is the first unit on acreage that will one day become a government center in the south county.

Hon. Jo Bacon, Mammoth Lakes Mayor “That gives us stability. It may take us a while to get all the other pieces of a civic center put together. But we’ve got the first step and that’s always important.”

Also important: functionality.

Ron Overholt, Interim Admin. Dir. of the Courts “The public that uses our court, and our staff and our judges, deserve to have safe and secure courthouses, and certainly a local treasure that you can have here with this beautiful building.”

Hon. Edward Forstenzer (Ret.), Former Presiding Judge, Mono Superior Court “I know that the people of Mono County will be well served by this building for many years to come.”

After the official ribbon cutting, community members toured the new facility. Public service is a prominent feature, with self help computer stations, and 3 customer service windows (where there was only one before) and a comfortable jury deliberation room.

There are two light and airy court rooms, with high tech digital evidence presentation equipment that everyone in the room can see.

There’s also a hearing room for small claims, traffic, family law, and arraignments, for when the other 2 courtrooms are busy.

Hector Gonzalez, CEO, Mono Superior Court “Having a room like this where we’re able to do that makes us work much more efficiently.”

And the video equipment is for remote arraignments in the jail in Bridgeport an hour away.

Hector Gonzalez, CEO, Mono Superior Court “Particularly in the winter when driving conditions here are very hazardous, this is a very efficient way for us to meet the requirements for someone to be arraigned.”

Certainly the most important upgrade is security – which was severely deficient before. Here, modern perimeter screening; video monitors; five holding cells including one for juveniles; a secure attorney client interview room.

Hector Gonzalez, CEO, Mono Superior Court “The attorney is completely safe, does not have to enter the detention holding area.”

A secure elevator locks out staff when inmates are being moved. And secure pathways that eliminate chain gang parades through the public hallways.

Hector Gonzalez, CEO, Mono Superior Court “You can’t have done anything worse in terms of security and for the appearance of the defendant as he’s being brought in in chains and stripes.”

mammoth

These days security features are necessary, and expensive. The building cost \$19.7 million. But the naturally beautiful surroundings are priceless.

Hector Gonzalez, CEO, Mono Superior Court "Our beautiful Sherwins, and over there the Mammoth Rock."

There's a spectacular peek-a-boo view out every window, gracing a courthouse that will serve the community for generations.

I'm Leanne Kozak reporting from Mammoth Lakes for California Courts News.