

Mt. Vernon

Register-News.com

Your News. Your Neighbors. Your Paper.

911 Broadway, P.O. Box 489, Mt. Vernon, IL 62864 (618) 242-0113

Courthouse looks into smoking area

July 23, 2008 10:03 am

— By KANDACE MCCOY

kandace.mccoy@register-news.com

MT. VERNON — The Jefferson County Building and Inventory Committee voted to have board chairman Ted Buck research the best place to create a designated smoking area for the courthouse grounds during its meeting Tuesday. According to committee chairman James Malone, the board received a letter from the Jefferson County Health Department advising a complaint had been filed of a violation of the Smoke-Free Illinois Act happening at the courthouse.

“Some people may not take the law serious,” Malone began, “but I believe we need to take it serious even if I may not agree with it.”

Malone said the courthouse has signs posted as required by law and has also removed cigarette butt containers to the end of the sidewalk, but if the county doesn't have a camera observing activity on the courthouse grounds, “people could easily walk up” to the doors with a cigarette.

“We can impose consequences of violation if we don't [follow the law]. The health department can impose consequences [to the county],” Malone said, adding such consequences “would not look good” on the county.

The question remained whether the offender of the violation was a county employee and whether Jefferson County Sheriff Roger Mulch should be enforcing the smoking ban.

“As joint employers, we can start a process of discipline [of an employee],” committee member Dexter Edmison said.

“If it's an employee,” Buck interjected, “and I don't know it is. I don't smoke, but there are people here that do and I sympathize with those that do smoke. We need an area where they can smoke.”

One possible designated smoking area discussed was the area over the old county jail. The area would not only be an alternative area for smoking, but also to keep the courthouse grounds clean, according to members of the committee. Wayne Hails said he has observed the majority of those who smoke on the courthouse grounds are those who “come in through the court system.”

“I bet there's 200 butts [on the south lawn],” Buck said. “Let's find out what it costs to set up a place to smoke. We need to look into this to see if it's possible. You can't send a bunch of people to jail because they smoke.”

Copyright © 1999-2008 cnhi, inc.