



CITY OF MERIDIAN and CITY OF GARDEN CITY

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CITIES ASK JUDGES TO AGREE THAT CONSOLIDATED COURTHOUSE COMPLIED WITH 22-YEAR-OLD ORDER

MERIDIAN – The Cities of Meridian and Garden City have submitted a joint proposal to the Fourth Judicial District regarding compliance with the 1994 court order mandating both cities provide courthouse facilities. It states the order was fulfilled with the construction of the consolidated courthouse for Ada County.

The proposal brings to light a resolution adopted by Ada County in 1998 in which the County called the consolidated courthouse the solution, stating “Whereas the scattered nature of the County facilities is economically inefficient and prevents the fair management of the justice system and the County administrative system.”

The Mayors of the Cities of Garden City and Meridian are hopeful this proposal will bring about a solution to this 22-year-old issue.

"In all appearances, the 1994 order was settled by the voters as acknowledged by the resolution adopted by the Ada County Commissioners. The reasons behind a consolidated courthouse are sound and agreed to by voters in 1996, by the Commission in 1998, and again in 2004 when Meridian asked to have a courtroom. The solution was provided for and paid for to benefit the entire county,” said Mayor Tammy de Weerd, City of Meridian. "If a problem exists in 2016, lets work together to address that - all cities stand ready to help with a countywide solution if warranted."

“Garden City is one of the smallest cities in Ada County. It makes no sense to build a courthouse in our community that is only six miles away from the consolidated courthouse that our taxpayers approved by a majority and funded,” said Mayor John Evans, City of Garden City. “On top of this, the consolidated courthouse is not even filled to capacity. The Trial Court Administrator said the utilization rate for courtrooms is around 80 percent.”

Here are some other highlights from the proposal:

- The 1994 order simply states that Meridian and Garden City were separately ordered to provide “suitable and adequate quarters for magistrate’s division of the Fourth Judicial District”.
- The order did NOT require the Cities to make monetary contributions.
 - o Current Idaho law **does not allow** the Courts or the County to require payments for Courts that are not within their City limits.

- At about the same time the Order was entered by the Court, the Ada County Commission was developing a plan to construct a consolidated courthouse and administrative complex.
 - o Only one of the two contingencies was going to occur in the late 1990s because building a state-of-the-art, county-wide consolidated courthouse facility on Front Street in Boise, and constructing two separate municipal courthouses in Meridian and Garden City at the same time, would be an absurd waste of taxpayer money.
- An October 10, 1995 letter from the Fourth Judicial District Court's Trial Administrator stated that Ada County had decided to pursue the construction of a consolidated courthouse and administrative facility on Front Street in Boise.
- Instead of requesting the Cities in 1995 and 1996 to make monetary contributions toward the construction of the consolidated courthouse, the Ada County Commission only requested that the Cities provide their full public support for the proposed courthouse project.
- The most significant component of the Ada County Commission's plan was that the project would NOT raise new property taxes to fund construction of the courthouse.
- The residents of Ada County overwhelmingly approved the ballot measure.
- The Cities have already complied with any obligations imposed by the 1994 order.
 - o Instead of being required to build separate court facilities in their respective Cities, both Meridian and Garden City supported and furthered Ada County's plan to build the consolidated courthouse in Boise.
 - o Additionally, the residents of Garden City and Meridian, along with the majority of Ada County taxpayers, have made substantial payments toward paying the bonds of the courthouse project over the past 20 years. In fact, the bond was retired in 2015, seven years earlier than anticipated.

For more information about this issue, or to see the full response, visit www.meridiancity.org/courthouse.

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The City of Meridian is located in the center of the Treasure Valley in southwest Idaho. Founded in 1893 and incorporated as a city in 1903, Meridian is now one of Idaho's largest and fastest growing communities. Meridian is cited by Money Magazine as one of its Top 50 Best Places to Live, and by America's Promise Alliance and ING as one of the nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People. For more information, visit www.meridiancity.org.