

## **FLUVANNA COUNTY POLICY FOR USE OF HISTORIC COURTHOUSE**

After more than 170 years, in November of 2001, the Fluvanna County Circuit Court moved its primary seat from the historic Fluvanna County Courthouse to a new Court Building located on a contiguous site in the village of Palmyra. The board of supervisors commissioned a study of appropriate uses of the Historic Courthouse. This study resulted in a set of recommendations for the continued use and maintenance of the Historic Courthouse.

One critical recommendation of the study committee was that the building should continue to be used, thereby continuing its tradition of service to the people of the County. However, along with this use, the committee's recommendations make clear that the character of the Historic Courthouse must be preserved and respected.

The County recognizes that there are three basic characteristics of the Historic Courthouse, all of which must be honored in connection with any and all future uses.

- (1) **Historic character.** The Historic Courthouse is one of the oldest existing public buildings in the County. Only the Stone Jail is older, and it was built as part of the same project. Its principal designer, John Hartwell Cocke, was the towering figure of Fluvanna's early history. A personal friend of Thomas Jefferson and other giants of post-Revolutionary Virginia, General Cocke's influence pervaded the first century of the County's history, and the courthouse built under his guidance forms a tangible, living link between modern Fluvanna and its most prominent citizen. While the County recognizes that certain necessary changes must be made to the building to enhance its utility for future use, the utmost care must be employed to ensure that all such changes remain consistent with the historic character of the building. The first touchstone of the future use of the building must be to preserve and enhance that historic character.
- (2) **Public service and dignity.** As the seat of County government for most of the County's existence, the Historic Courthouse has come to symbolize the dignity of government based on law and justice. Any future use must be consistent with these principles. To that end, the first priority of all future use must be to serve the public through the government of the County, including the courts of the Commonwealth that serve the County. Any other use must be of a character which respects and promotes the public character of the building and its status as the people's temple of justice.
- (3) **Intrinsic value.** Along with its historic character, it must never be forgotten that the Historic Courthouse represents an irreplaceable architectural treasure which must be preserved for future generations.

While it is to be expected that future use will necessarily entail future investment in maintenance and repair, and that certain modifications to ensure continued safe and efficient use will be undertaken, care must be taken to ensure that the same shall always be consistent with size, structural design and materials of the building. Thus, for example, any use which would impose excessive wear on the existing heart-pine floors should be avoided, as should be substantial modification of the basic fabric of the building, especially of the courtroom.

With the foregoing in mind, the following guidelines shall apply for the use of the historic Fluvanna County Courthouse:

- (1) Priority shall at all times be given to the use of the building for public uses. Such uses shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:
  - (a) Hearings of the courts of the Commonwealth which serve the County;
  - (b) Meetings of the board of supervisors and other duly constituted public bodies, such as the planning commission, board of zoning appeals, economic development commission, industrial development authority and such committees (such as the court green committee) or task forces and study teams which function as part of the county government;
  - (c) Public ceremonies authorized by the board of supervisors;
  - (d) Educational activities, including tours, lectures, historical reenactments and the like, sponsored by the Fluvanna County Public Schools.
  
- (2) Private entities may be permitted use of the building, provided such use is consistent with, and promotive of, the character of the building as set forth above. To that end, every such use shall be carried out with dignity and decorum, including limitations on noise and appropriateness of dress and general behavior of its participants. Contemplated uses may include, for example, the following:
  - (a) Use of appropriate portions of the building for research, record storage and historical displays by the Fluvanna County Historical Society as the principal guardian of the history of the County;
  - (b) Educational activities sponsored by accredited bona fide educational institutions or other responsible community groups, other than the County's Public Schools;
  - (c) Other activities of a historical or educational character which are consistent with the foregoing principles.

- (3) All users (other than those users described in paragraphs (1)(a) and (b), above) shall make written application for such use to the county administrator, which application shall specify, among other things, (a) a description of the use which is proposed to be made; (b) the duration of such proposed use; (c) any furniture, equipment and materials which will be needed for such use, including specifically all lighting and other electrical equipment; (d) any changes to the furnishings or decoration of the interior or exterior of the building; (e) number of participants, including spectators, anticipated; (f) proposed provisions for trash disposal and janitorial services, security, parking and traffic control and other similar services. The county administrator, who may act through his designee, or the board of supervisors, as the case may be, may require any potential user to supply such additional information as may be helpful in determining whether the proposed use is consistent with the character of the building.
- (4) The County may require any user to provide evidence of financial responsibility of such user to ensure that the County shall be indemnified against all hazards, including, but not necessarily limited to, fire and other physical damage; together with the provision of janitorial, security and other services, as well as extraordinary use of water, sewer, electrical and other public utility services and wear and tear on the building. The user shall remain at all times liable for all of the foregoing.
- (5) The county administrator, or his designee, may allow the use of the Historic Courthouse for private users depending upon availability. As meeting space is in great demand in this area, meetings for private users will be very limited during business hours. (Modified: May 2006)
- (6) In addition to the foregoing, and in addition to any and all requirements which may be imposed in a particular case, the following shall apply to any use of the Historic Courthouse and its immediate environs:
  - (a) Alcoholic beverages, tobacco products and all drugs (other than lawful over-the-counter and lawfully prescribed medications) shall be strictly prohibited.
  - (b) There shall be no electronically amplified music.
  - (c) All furnishings and decorations shall be restored to their original positions and condition immediately after the completion of the use. No additional furnishings, equipment or materials shall be used on the premises except as expressly approved by the County.
  - (d) There shall be no permanent modifications of any kind to the premises except with the express prior approval of the board of supervisors.
- (7) These policies may be modified from time to time without prior notice.