

Mental health clinic on track for expansion

By **CLEON RICKEL**
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Franklin County Mental Health is on track on its plan to expand its Eisenhower Road clinic.

Diane Drake, Mental Health executive director, told the Franklin County Commission Monday that she expects construction to begin on the expansion in July and be ready for use in mid 2007.

Drake and Dottie Riley, bond attorney for the county, met with the commission as part of a public hearing.

The county previously agreed to issue up to \$1.6 million in special county bonds called "certificates of participation" to help finance the

\$1.8 million project.

However, the commission had to conduct a public hearing to maintain the tax-free status of the bonds, Riley said.

Mental Health will repay the bonds with its revenues. The clinic has received a \$400,000 grant for the expansion and expects to receive another \$340,000 from a special tax-credit grant program.

The number of clients has grown, Drake said.

When the clinic started tracking its numbers 10 years ago, the clinic's average number of clients was 332 per month, and the clinic had an average of 1,537 visits per month.

Last year, the clinic averaged 796 clients and 6,217 visits per month, she said.

In other matters, the commissioners:

- Decided to seek bids for a new dump truck and three truck-tractors.

By buying now, the county will be able to immediately avoid new federal regulations going into effect 2007 requiring heavy diesel engines to meet tougher air pollution rules, Jim Haag, county public works director, said.

- Agreed to rezone slightly more than 50 acres at Marshall Road and Nevada Terrace from A-1, an agricultural zoning classification, at the

request of the owners Mike and Patricia Wiseman, Baldwin City.

A 10-acre part of the tract will be R-E, a rural residential classification, and the rest will be A-2, transitional agriculture.

- Heard from Della Sandgren, an owner of Ottawa property, who said that property in Franklin County wasn't being appraised equally.

The inequality means that some taxpayers are more unfairly taxed, she said.

The state says that the county appraisals meet the state guidelines, but the guidelines need some work, she said.