



By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Frenchman Valley Coop General Manager Jim Chism said they're beginning to feel at home in their new headquarters in Imperial.

Chism and his staff moved from their old offices across the street at 143 Broadway to the new offices at 202 Broadway on the weekend of May 30.

The new building features 7,500 square feet of office space on the main floor, along with 7,500 square feet in the basement that includes a majority of storage and some office space.

The new \$1.75 million facility will come in under budget, Chism said. TCC Corporation of Greeley, Colo., served as the general contractor for the project which was finished ahead of schedule.

David Wilson of W Design in McCook served as the architect while W Design served as the engineer.

The building will house 25 staff members as well as the computer systems for the coop.

Outgrew old facility

Chism said they simply outgrew their previous facility, prompting the management and the board of directors to begin looking at options.

Consideration was given to adding on to the previous facility, which was estimated to be 50-60 years old. However, Chism said the board ultimately decided against that.

They felt a new building would better serve the patrons of the coop for many years to come.

Chism said three department heads are housed in the building. Cubicles in the center of the main office area will be used by clerical staff.

One area of offices is devoted to the grain department. The space devoted to grain merchandisers was quite limited in the old facility and separate offices will better allow staff to serve patrons, Chism said.

Overall, the new building yielded three times the space the coop had in their previous building.

The main floor over the basement is a four-inch concrete slab, which enables the coop to use the basement for shelter in emergency situations.

The basement also contains a large fireproof vault room for long-term storage of key records.

A large meeting room will accommodate up to 40 people and will double as the board room.

Chism said the meeting room will allow them to conduct training in-house rather than having to rent outside facilities.

Dirt work for the new building began in mid-December and construction progressed rapidly during the first five months of 2009.

No plans have been made for the old building. It will still continue to be used for the grain shop and the scales will be used by the feed department.

The scales are also used some during harvest for smaller trucks.

With wheat harvest just three to four weeks off, Chism said they were glad to be able to make the move now and get any bugs worked out before harvest begins.

Frenchman Valley Coop operates in 20 locations ranging from McCook to the east to Pine Bluffs, Wyo. to the west.

Last year, the coop finished the fiscal year with record sales of \$525 million.