

# City police station to be moved

## \$1M work bid approved

By **Laura Bond**

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Residents who wander through City Hall in search of the Ruston police station will soon find their destination elsewhere.

After years of sharing a building with the city's billing department, mayor's office and others, the Ruston police station will have a home of its very own.

During the monthly City Council meeting Monday, Ruston aldermen approved West Monroe's Don Leach Construction Inc. as the low bidder — with a bid of \$1,091,000 — to start construction to turn the old post office into a place suitable for policemen.

The now vacant post office, located across the street from City Hall, will undergo significant renovations. Ruston Police Chief Steve Rogers said architect Mike Walpole's plans include taking out a few walls and switching the main entrance from the Trenton Street side to the side of the building that faces Florida Avenue, where the parking spaces are.

"We're really excited," Rogers said. "It's been a long time coming."

The biggest improvement will be the addition of space. Rogers said the new building is approximately 11,000 square

feet, or more than twice the size of the current space of 4,800 square feet. Crowding almost 50 employees into the small City Hall space can create issues with noise level and privacy, Rogers said.

"Right now, our squad room is also the training room and the locker room," he said. "In

the new building, the dispatch room and the records room will be separate, and we will have a separate room to interview suspects and complainants."

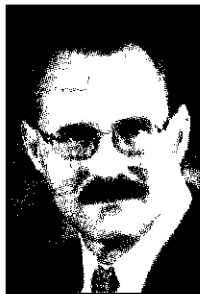
Work on the building is expected to start immediately, and Rogers estimates the job could take six-seven

months to complete, weather permitting.

City Public Works Director Lewis Love said the bids for construction were above the budgeted amount.

When a city budget was created for the 2009-10 fiscal year, it was about \$11 million less than the previous year because of the state of the economy. Rogers said, however, that funds were included in the new budget to increase the police department from 50 to 53 employees. He said the increase was necessary, because the city is growing and more land has been annexed.

The department is planning to hire another communications officer and three patrol officers.



**Rogers**



Leader photo by LAURA BOND

**Construction will soon begin to transform the former post office plaza into a new station for the Ruston Police Department.**