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Design Contract Signed for New Philadelphia Family Court

PHILADELPHIA, September 17, 2008 - In a tangible step toward the creation of a new home for Philadelphia Family Court, a contract has been signed for initial design work on a high-rise courthouse at 15th and Arch Streets.

"We are no longer simply *talking* about a new Family Court building for Philadelphia," said Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille. "We are entering the design phase for this building. This courthouse is going to become a reality. The legislature has committed \$200 million for its construction. The governor has pledged his support. It will take some time, but we are on the way."

Philadelphia Family Court currently operates in two locations. Juvenile proceedings and cases involving abused and neglected children are heard at 1801 Vine Street. Divorce cases, child custody and support matters, protection from abuse cases and other domestic matters are heard at 34 South 11th Street.

"The antiquated facilities of Family Court in two completely separate locations are long overdue for replacement," said Castille, who serves as the Supreme Court's liaison to the Philadelphia courts. "It has been our goal for many years to unify the court at a single location to better serve the citizens of Philadelphia."

The prospective site of the Family Court building is an open lot on the northwest corner of 15th and Arch Streets. The property is owned by the Philadelphia Parking Authority. Development rights are held by Northwest 15th Street Associates, a firm affiliated with Oliver Tyrone Pulver Corp. of West Conshohocken.

The design contract was signed by David C. Lawrence, administrator of the Philadelphia courts, and Donald W. Pulver, president of Oliver Tyrone Pulver Corp.

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The contract authorizes the payment of up to \$250,000 for initial design work to be done by Northwest's architectural and engineering firm, Ewing Cole, of Philadelphia. This phase of the design work is intended in part to determine whether all components of Family Court can be combined at 15th and Arch under current zoning, which limits the height of a building that can be constructed there.

Lawrence said the design contract will be paid from a special court fund dedicated to Family Court. Since 2006, a 20 percent surcharge on civil court filings in Philadelphia has been earmarked for this fund, known as the Family Court Facility Fund. The fund now contains \$5.7 million and may be used for building design and a range of other appropriate expenses relating to Family Court facilities.

The \$200 million approved by the legislature in this year's state capital budget is entirely separate. That allocation is for building construction. The governor must approve release of that appropriation.

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