

RIVER FOREST CIVIC CENTER

Review/Accomplishments of Fiscal Year 2022 – 2023

Overview

The primary responsibilities of the Facility Administrator for the River Forest Civic Center Authority (RFCCA) are to oversee the daily operations of the building and address issues which arise, research information and make recommendations for building projects, coordinate the usage of the facility for various user groups and ensure the facility is being operated in a fiscally responsible manner.

During the past fiscal year, the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) continued to have a residual effect on the operations of the building and impacted activities which have typically been held in the building. Additionally, as outlined in greater detail below, ongoing adjustments have been made throughout the year to address pandemic related issues in an effort to minimize the impact on building operations.

I. Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic.

For the third consecutive year, the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) continued to impact building operations. Although the building remained open throughout the fiscal year, the number of persons participating in activities is still significantly lower compared to pre-COVID enrollment including people who are reluctant to participate in group activities. As a reminder, the building initially closed from mid-March to mid-June of 2020 when the State of Illinois mandated the closure of all non-essential businesses. In mid-June of 2020 the State permitted facilities to re-open albeit with numerous restrictions. Based on these restrictions, classrooms and the gymnasium became the primary areas of the building which could be utilized.

Although the federal government has indicated the pandemic will be considered officially over in May of 2023, it is likely several changes that have been implemented to address COVID related issues (virtual meetings, masking, smaller group sizes, etc.) will continue to factor into building operations for the foreseeable future.

II. Renewal of the Lease Management Agreement with RF Community Center

The current lease management agreement between the RF Civic Center Authority as building owner and the RF Community Center as the lease management agent will end on June 30, 2023. A new five year lease was officially approved and signed by both parties in March of 2022 and will go into effect July 1, 2023 with a renewal option for an additional four years. From a historical standpoint, the RF Civic Center Authority and the RF Community Center have had a partnership since 1986 when applications for funding were prepared and submitted to the State of Illinois as part of the statewide civic center building program. Although funding for the project was not received until 1991 and occupancy of the 8020 Madison Street building did not occur until June of 1993, the RF Community Center has been the designated manager of the building since its inception.

III. Information and Accomplishments

- 1. Creation of the Madison Street Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District.** In December of 2016, the Village of River Forest finalized the creation of the Madison Street TIF District which encompasses all properties on the north side of Madison Street from Lathrop to Thatcher, including the River Forest Civic Center Authority building and residential property located in selected adjacent blocks. Prior to the creation of the Madison Street TIF District, Civic Center Authority trustees raised concerns about the possibility of the Civic Center building being developed for a different use and displacing the Community Center. Village officials assured RFCCA trustees it is not the intent of the Village to change the use of the Civic Center property and, if a developer were to express interest in the future, public hearings must occur as part of the overall process.

To date, the only major developments in the Madison Street TIF District have been the acquisition of two commercial properties and two additional residential properties by the Village of River Forest. All of these properties are located in the eastern section of the TIF district and are slated for demolition in 2023.

2. **Capital Improvement Project Committee.** As the effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have subsided and building usage has increased, the Capital Improvement Project Committee (CIPC) met on October 17, 2022 to review building operations and discuss items that need to be addressed.

As stipulated in the Lease Management Agreement, the CIPC was created to address the needs of the Civic Center building. The Committee typically meets 1-2 times per year and is responsible for assessing the overall condition of the building and making recommendations to continue the long-term efficient operation of the building. Given the age of the building, the CIPC recognizes preventive maintenance and repairs will need to be undertaken annually to maintain the integrity and extend the life of the building, especially since several physical plant components are close to the end of their projected useful life.

Once again, due primarily to the adverse financial impact of COVID-19 and the uncertainty of how long COVID related restrictions would be in place, capital improvement expenditures during the fiscal year were limited to only replacing items that failed or are critical to the efficient operation of the building. Additionally, the three options to renovate the building that were presented by Cordogan-Clark Architects & Engineers (CCAЕ) in their Feasibility Study report, ranged from 43–55 million dollars which was considered cost prohibitive and would be of minimal benefit to the majority of the local taxing bodies. However, the report contained valuable information about building components which can be utilized by the Capital Improvement Committee to help determine an appropriate course of action, especially since several areas of the building are showing visible signs of wear and tear.

The following projects have either been undertaken during the past fiscal year or have previously been considered and will be re-evaluated at an appropriate time:

1. **HVAC Units.** Heat exchangers were replaced in two of the rooftop units during the fiscal year and preventive maintenance (PM) continues to help prolong their projected life expectancy. Due to the success of PM measures, the CIPC has decided to wait until a unit stops working before replacing it.
2. **Replacement of Existing Light Switches to Energy Efficient Switches.** Before the pandemic the CIPC approved a project to replace all light switches with motion-activated switches. However this project has been delayed due to the difficulty in finding switches compatible with the instant start ballasts that were installed as part of an energy efficient lighting upgrade several years ago. There are ~ 125 light switches in the building consisting of both single pole and 3 – way switches and the cost to replace all switches was previously estimated to be ~ \$6,500.00. However, it is now expected the cost of this project will rise due to increases in post pandemic supply costs. Staff will continue to check into the availability of grants which could reduce the out of pocket cost of the project.
3. **Mandated Testing of Building Systems & Components.** Due to legislation enacted by the State of Illinois, several annual and periodic tests/inspections are required for the building. Although the fee for each test or inspection varies, annual tests/inspections are required for 1) smoke detectors and fire alarm system components, 2) elevator, 3) sprinkler system, 4) backflow valve to prevent the mixing of sprinkler system water with the potable water supply and 5) radon testing. A “Lead in the Water Supply” test was also required and completed in February of 2018. Excluding any required repairs, the cost of the various mandated annual tests/inspections is ~ \$5,000 each year.

3. Building Usage

a) River Forest Community Center Programs

As outlined in the Lease Management Agreement, the River Forest Community Center is the primary tenant in the Civic Center building and is responsible for maintaining the operations of the building. The Community Center offers a number of programs and services, including 1) child care programs licensed by the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS), 2) a preschool program also licensed by DCFS, 3) various tot programs, 4) a variety of recreation or sports programs, 5) cooperative programs for seniors in conjunction with RF Township, 6) room rentals and 7) full and partial day summer camp programs for participants ages 3–12. The building is open seven days per week, typically from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm although hours of operation may vary according to scheduled activities.

Indoor Pickleball was added as a cooperative program between the Community Center, RF Township and RF Park District during the winter months of the past fiscal year. Starting in December, 2022, five separate weekly sessions were held in the gym with each session lasting for 2 – 2 ½ hours. Pickleball has been well received and continues to be scheduled in the gym into April of 2023.

b) Special Events in the Building

As a result of the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of special events held in the building during the past fiscal year continued to be limited and included the following:

- a. **April** – RFCC Week of the Young Child with daily events and activities
- b. **May** – Celebrating Seniors week with various seminars and activities
- c. **February** – RFCC Daddy Daughter Dance attended by ~340 people
- d. **Monthly** – various Early Childhood Collaboration meetings and training sessions and Illinois Action for Children training seminars. The Community Center has been designated as one of the primary locations for conducting early childhood training in the Chicago area and some of the agencies started offering training sessions in the building again.

Other special events that were typically held in the building prior to the pandemic included the RF Township Assessor/Cook County Assessor taxpayer outreach seminars and the RFCC Halloween party.

c) OPRFHS - Community Integrated Transitional Education (CITE) Program

OPRFHS continued to operate its CITE program in the building with modifications to address COVID-19 related concerns. Due to the pandemic, OPRFHS suspended all of its classes in the building and went to a remote learning format from March 13, 2020 until February 8, 2021 before re-opening on a limited basis. The following is an overview of OPRFHS classes that are currently held in the building.

1. **CITE I**. In 2008, the OPRFHS CITE I program which serves young adult students ages 18-22 with developmental disabilities, moved into the building as part of a Space Sharing Agreement with the Community Center. There is daily interaction between the participants and staff of the Community Center and OPRFHS which has helped strengthen the partnership between the agencies. Numerous comments have been received about the positive impact and benefit of the interaction between Community Center and OPRFHS program participants. Additionally, CITE I participants perform a number of tasks in the building on a daily basis, including assisting in classrooms, serving lunch, filling vending machines and cleaning various areas of the building.

Building Usage (continued)

c) OPRFHS - Community Integrated Transitional Education (CITE) Program (continued)

1. **CITE II.** In 2011, the CITE II program which serves higher functioning young adult students ages 18-22 with developmental disabilities, was moved from a separate off-site location into Room 201 on the second floor. Positive feedback has been received from staff and participants about the CITE II program although there is less interaction between students and RFCC staff on a daily basis since many CITE II students work outside the building or attend classes at local colleges.
2. **CITE III.** In 2017, the CITE III program which also serves higher functioning young adult students ages 18-22 with developmental disabilities, was moved to the 8020 Madison Street building. Much like the CITE II program, participants are often engaged in off-site activities although several students have undergone training to assist in the RFCC front office.

d) Opportunity Knocks.

Opportunity Knocks (OK) continued to operate its programs on a modified basis in response to COVID-19 related concerns. In 2020 Opportunity Knocks programs closed from March until mid-summer of 2020 when they re-opened on a limited basis in compliance with State mandated restrictions. The following is an overview of Opportunity Knocks' operations that typically occur during the year.

Opportunity Knocks is a local not for profit organization which provides programs and services for persons with developmental disabilities and celebrated its 13th anniversary in February. OK provides an after school program which has 30-35 participants and meets three times/week on a year round basis. OK also offers a full day Life Shop program that meets three times/week and has ~10-12 participants attending each day. Both programs continue to gain exposure and generate positive feedback.

Similar to the OPRFHS CITE programs, there is daily interaction between the OK participants, Community Center participants and staff, and other building patrons which has resulted in substantial positive feedback. In addition to sharing resources throughout the year, Opportunity Knocks and the Community Center have also worked together on selected special events to increase program awareness and to strengthen the partnership between the agencies.

Due to the uncertainties caused by the pandemic, the five-year lease between the Community Center and OK that went into effect June 1, 2016 has been extended under the same terms on a month to month basis. Prior to the pandemic OK hired additional staff to meet the needs of their two businesses which were created to provide employment opportunities for some of their participants; a) Knock Out Pickles which supplies pickles to several local businesses and restaurants and b) a catering service which is available to the general public.

e) River Forest School District 90

The Community Center and RF School District 90 continue to renew their partnership agreement annually for the Inclusion Preschool program that accommodates 3-5 year old participants as mandated by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Some Inclusion Preschool participants attend classes at the Community Center and the program has been well received and generated positive feedback.

Building Usage (continued)

f) Exterior Building Projects/Improvements

In light of COVID-19 and the ongoing Feasibility Study, no major exterior building projects or improvements were undertaken during the past fiscal year. Routine maintenance continues to be performed throughout the year to keep the exterior appearance in a presentable condition.

g) Previously Initiated Projects - FY 2022-2023 Updates

a) Replacement of Flooring in Room 202. The recommendation to replace the flooring in Room 202 was approved during the 2016 – 2017 fiscal year but has been deferred multiple times due to other projects taking precedence. Room 202 is approximately 1250 square feet and has a laminate floor that is over 25 years old and showing signs of wear and tear which is more noticeable since wall dividers and new window treatments were installed in 2016 to accommodate additional programs offered by the Community Center and RF Township. Overall, the laminate flooring has held up well and it is recommended the existing floor should be replaced with another laminate floor product in a neutral color. The cost of this project was previously estimated to be ~ \$ 9,500.00 and included the cost of removing the old floor, prep work and installation of new flooring. As agreed when the project was initially approved, the cost of the project will be shared equally between the Community Center and the RFCCA Capital Improvement fund based on the mutual benefit to each agency.

b) Security System Upgrades. In the fall of 2016, the security system in the building was upgraded and nine new digital cameras were added, three analog cameras were replaced with digital cameras and the DVR recorder was upgraded. The recommendation to upgrade the security system is based on several factors including 1) increased building usage, 2) expectations of program participants, 3) advancements in technology and 4) the number of litigious actions which have occurred in general.

The RF Police Department performed a site inspection of the premises and acknowledged that many security measures are already in place at the building. They also emphasized no security system is foolproof nor will it prevent all crime. Although very few crimes have occurred at the building throughout the years, the Police Department suggested additional security cameras could act as a crime deterrent. It is anticipated the cost of this project will be shared equally between the Community Center and the Capital Improvement Fund based on the mutual benefit to both agencies.

c) Building Signage. Although developing a coordinated signage plan throughout the building has been discussed with the various occupants in the building, this project has been deferred multiple times due to other priorities. While coordinated signage would be an improvement, the primary reason this project has been deferred is because functional signage exists throughout the building.

h) Miscellaneous

a) Building Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure. In May of 2022 the Community Center hired CDS Office Technologies to conduct an assessment of the IT infrastructure in the building and devise a comprehensive solution to address deficiencies. CDS recommended several upgrades including new hardware components, installing new cabling and adding wireless access points throughout the building. This work was completed in the Fall of 2022. Recommendations to upgrade the internet and phone systems have also been made and it is anticipated this work will be completed during the 2023 – 2024 fiscal year with the costs to be shared between the Community Center, RF Township and the Capital Improvement fund since these solutions will mutually benefit each of the agencies.

h) Miscellaneous (continued)

b) Replacement of HVAC Equipment. As previously addressed with the Civic Center Authority board, the components of the building HVAC system vary in age. As an overview of the HVAC systems, heat on the first floor is generated by a zoned boiler system (3 units) and a rooftop chiller unit provides cooling. Both of these components work in conjunction with a large air handler that circulates forced air throughout the first floor of the building to heat and cool various areas.

The second floor is serviced by six (6) rooftop units which heat and cool various zones of the floor as needed. With the exception of two HVAC units replaced in November, 2018, the other rooftop units were installed in the late 1990's as part of an energy efficiency upgrade for the building.

Last fiscal year, PremiStar (formerly West Town Mechanical) inspected the HVAC components and prepared a list and cost estimates of projects that should be undertaken over the next 2-3 years to replace outdated equipment. The list does not include replacement of the rooftop units since the Capital Improvement Committee has decided to replace units when they fail. Since 2013, the following HVAC projects have been completed:

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| a. | Replacement of 2 Rooftop Heat Exchangers | Fall, 2022 |
| b. | Replacement of Room 202 HVAC unit | Fall, 2018 |
| c. | Replacement of the NW second floor HVAC unit | Fall, 2018 |
| d. | Replacement of Boiler #2 | Fall, 2016 |
| e. | Replacement of rooftop compressor #2 | Spring, 2014 |
| f. | Replacement of the gym HVAC control system | Spring, 2014 |
| g. | Replacement of the Circuit Setter | Fall, 2013 |
| h. | Replacement of the main hot water system pump | Fall, 2013 |
| i. | Replacement of the air handler coil pump | Fall, 2013 |
| j. | Replacement of automatic drain valve | Fall, 2013 |
| k. | Replacement of various rooftop components, relays, etc. | Fall, 2013 |

c) Replacement of Miscellaneous HVAC Parts. The total cost for miscellaneous repairs paid from the Capital Improvement fund was ~\$35,000.00 which included ~\$13,000.00 of expenses deferred from the previous fiscal year due to pandemic related uncertainties. As addressed in the Capital Improvement budget and given the age of the HVAC components, it is inevitable parts will need to be replaced during the year to keep the various units in proper working order. In addition to the amount paid from the Capital Improvement fund, the Community Center also paid ~\$14,000.00 for other service calls for HVAC repairs and maintenance items.

a) Roof. During the past year, repairs were completed on the roof areas adjacent to the west stairwell and an area ~ 30' x 25' to the east of the second floor atrium. As noted in previous reports, several areas of the roof have deteriorated significantly and it has become increasingly more difficult to come up with "band-aid" type solutions. As discussed at the monthly Civic Center meetings, major roof repairs were deferred due to the ongoing Feasibility Study. However, based on the frequency which new leaks are occurring, a long-term solution will need to be developed in the near future. Options for replacing the roof, either in sections or in its entirety, will be explored to determine the most cost-effective approach. Since 2004 preventive maintenance has been undertaken annually and has effectively prolonged the life of the roof. For the short term, preventive maintenance will continue to be done on the roof to prevent more serious damage from leaks. Although some areas of the roof are still in fairly good shape for its age, the cost of additional preventive maintenance work will need to be compared to replacing all or selected sections.

Feasibility Study

At the December, 2019 meeting of the Feasibility Study committee it was the consensus opinion of various stakeholders that each of the building project options was cost prohibitive due to a projected cost of 43- 55 million dollars. In January, 2020, representatives from the Park District of Oak Park (PDOP) presented information about their building project which was used for comparison to the RF project. Subsequently, representatives from the Civic Center Authority/Township, RF Community Center and RF Park District met in February of 2021 and concluded the most practical and cost effective approach would be for each organization to address their respective needs individually instead of trying to create a larger multi-agency facility.

Although no meetings of the Feasibility Study committee or subcommittees have been held since February of 2021, the Village of River Forest has not formally accepted the building assessment report prepared by Cordogan-Clark Architects & Engineers or acknowledged the conclusion of the Feasibility Study. As reported at the monthly Civic Center Authority meetings, the Feasibility Study was initiated in 2017 to assess the needs of the River Forest Community Center and other selected key stakeholders to determine the practicality and/or cost effectiveness of potentially renovating and/or expanding the current civic center building. The following is a summary of events that occurred as part of the Feasibility Study:

1. Summary of Key Feasibility Study Developments during 2019 – 2021.

April, 2019. In response to the Request for Proposals (RFP) which the Village published in February, five architectural/engineering firms submitted proposals to conduct the Feasibility Study. In April representatives from selected key stakeholders interviewed prospective firms and narrowed the list down to two.

May, 2019. After receiving additional information from the final two firms, the committee recommended accepting the proposal from Cordogan-Clark Architects & Engineers (CCAЕ). Since the Feasibility Study is being funded through the Madison Street Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District, the committee's recommendation was forwarded to the village board who approved the contract with CCAЕ in late May.

June, 2019. Cordogan-Clark held a kick-off meeting in mid-June and met with the committee of key stakeholders to present an overview of the feasibility study. CCAЕ indicated their first step would be to meet individually with each of the key stakeholders to gather information about each agency's specific needs.

July 2019. After meeting with each of the key stakeholders, Cordogan-Clark presented an overview of their findings to the committee in mid-July. During the summer, CCAЕ planned to review the building blueprints and conduct site visits to assess the condition of the current building. They anticipated that a preliminary report and recommendations would be prepared sometime in the fall.

November 2019. On November 19 CCAЕ met with the committee of key stakeholders and presented their initial report and recommendations. Their overall recommendation was the size of the building needed to be doubled to ~ 84,000 square feet to accommodate the programs of the key stakeholders and outlined 3 potential solutions to accomplish this: a) adding a raised two-story addition in the parking lot with surface parking and adding a third story to selected areas of the current building, b) adding a smaller two-story raised addition in the parking lot with underground parking and adding one to two stories in selected areas of the current building and c) tearing down the current building and rebuilding a new facility on site. After the presentation, committee members raised several concerns about the plans, including: a) **inadequate parking** – although the size of the building is being doubled, the number of parking spots is less than what is currently available, b) **cost of the project** - is estimated at 35 – 40 million dollars depending on the option, c) **off-site location** - although an offsite location has been referenced as an option, no further information was presented about it. CCAЕ will gather more information and schedule a follow-up meeting in early 2020.

1. Summary of Key Feasibility Study Developments during 2019 – 2021 (continued).

February 2020. On February 25 CCAE met with the committee of key stakeholders to address concerns raised in November. Although CCAE continued to gather additional information since there were still some unanswered questions, they estimated the cost of the project would increase to ~38-45 million dollars to address the parking concerns, building requirements and acquisition costs if the off site location is to be pursued. Once CCAE completes additional research, another meeting will be scheduled.

June 2020. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, a virtual meeting was held on June 2 to discuss the information which CCAE prepared in response to questions and concerns that were raised about 1) project costs, 2) the alternate site and 3) financing options for a new facility. Since support from each of the organizations would be critical for a project to move forward, this was also the first meeting that a board member attended with the designated representative from each organization. CCAE reviewed the different options and indicated the cost would escalate to ~43 – 55 million dollars primarily due to the increased costs for parking. Despite being identified as a key factor, no additional information was presented about financing options.

October 2020. A meeting was held in late October and was attended by the designated representative and board member from each organization. CCAE presented an initial Building Assessment report (66 pages). The costs of the various options for the project were still the primary concern raised by committee members.

November 2020. Additional discussion of the three options and associated costs presented by CCAE.

December 2020. Based on input from committee members, CCAE revised the Building Assessment report which was reviewed by the committee. Committee members continued to raise concerns about the 43–48 million dollar cost of the project and also felt each organization will have ongoing operational challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that will need to be addressed on a priority basis in the future.

Since the Park District of OP (PDOP) is undertaking a project with a significantly lower cost than the RF project, the committee felt it would be beneficial to have a representative from PDOP present information about their project for comparison purposes. A future course of action was also discussed since Erik Palm, RF Village Administrator who has been the point person for the Feasibility Study, recently announced he accepted another position and would be leaving in February, 2021.

January 2021. Jan Arnold from the Park District of Oak Park (PDOP) presented information about their project. The OP project is significantly smaller than the RF project and will not include classrooms or need to meet DCFS licensing regulations for programs. Although there has been more publicity and increased fundraising efforts in the past two years, initial planning for the project started ~ seven years ago. Additional steps have also been taken, including the development of architectural plans, to meet criteria for grant applications. While efforts to secure additional funding will continue, there is a possibility the project may not come to fruition if their grant applications are not approved and/or funding goals are not met.

February 2021. Based on reservations some committee members expressed about the costs and benefits of the proposed RF project and with the uncertainty of who would organize future meetings due to Erik Palm's resignation, representatives from the Civic Center Authority, RF Park District and Community Center met twice in February as a small group to discuss the viability of a scaled down project. Representatives from the three agencies concluded the most practical and cost effective approach would be for each organization to address their respective needs individually instead of trying to create a larger multi-agency facility.

2. Feasibility Study Historical Information.

Initial discussions began in November of 2017 with meetings being held during the spring of 2018 to gather input to draft an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) to undertake a Feasibility Study. The IGA was finalized in May 2018 and presented to the following key stakeholders in June for approval:

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| a) River Forest Civic Center Authority | e) River Forest School District 90 |
| b) River Forest Community Center | f) River Forest Township |
| c) River Forest Park District | g) Village of River Forest |
| d) River Forest Public Library | |

Since the Feasibility Study will be paid from the Madison Street Tax Increment Finance (TIF) fund that is administered by the Village, all parties agreed the Village would also be best suited to coordinate various aspects of the Feasibility Study, including publishing notices and soliciting Requests for Proposals (RFP) to select a firm or individual to undertake the study.

In October of 2018, the Village selected Gil Herman, a RF resident who previously facilitated studies as a paid consultant, to conduct the Feasibility Study. Mr. Herman met with each of the key stakeholders to gather information and assess the needs of each respective organization. After meeting with stakeholders individually, a group meeting of all stakeholders took place on January 7, 2019.

At the January 7, 2019 meeting, each of the seven (7) stakeholders who were part of the IGA, and Opportunity Knocks who is a tenant of the Community Center in the building, presented information about their operations and future anticipated needs. After the presentations, a group discussion took place to answer questions, clarify information and determine the next steps for the Feasibility Study. Although Mr. Herman indicated he would be stepping down at the conclusion of the January 7 meeting, he would forward all information presented during the meeting to the Village for inclusion as part of the Request for Proposals (RFP) that would be advertised to complete the Feasibility Study.

