

# RIVER FOREST CIVIC CENTER

## Review/Accomplishments of Fiscal Year 2020 – 2021

### 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, two events have had and continue to have a major impact on the operation of the building.

- 1) **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic**. As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), the building has either been closed completely or open on a limited basis during the majority of the fiscal year. As predicted at the end of last fiscal year, it was anticipated the operations of the building and its tenants would be negatively impacted for some time. The building initially closed in mid-March of 2020 when the State mandated the closure of all non-essential businesses. The initial closure lasted until mid-June when the State permitted facilities to re-open albeit with numerous restrictions. Based on the restrictions, classrooms and the gymnasium have been the primary areas of the building which have been open. Since vaccinations became available in early February of 2021 and the number of new COVID cases has decreased, there is cautious optimism that more programs can be re-started in the near future. Additionally, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, several significant changes have emerged such as virtual meetings, e-learning, etc. which will continue to affect building operations going forward.
- 2) **Feasibility Study**. As addressed in greater detail below, the Capital Improvement Committee has agreed no significant building projects should be undertaken until the Feasibility Study is completed and a course of action determined. Unfortunately, since the Feasibility Study has been ongoing for over three years, several areas of the building are showing visible signs of wear and tear which reflects negatively on the building.

### Feasibility Study

As reported at the monthly Civic Center Authority meetings, the Feasibility Study which 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 has still not been completed.

#### 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.

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

**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, CCAE 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 CCAE 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. CCAE will gather more information and schedule a follow-up meeting in early 2020.

**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 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 – 48 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) was currently 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.

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

**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 the grant applications are not approved and 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 agreed to meet as a small group and discuss the viability of a scaled down project. Representatives from the three agencies met twice in February 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.

**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:

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 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.

## **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. The only publicized developments in the TIF District to date have been the acquisition of the Lutheran Children and Family Services property located at 7610 Madison Street and a residence located at 10 Lathrop by the Village. 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.

- 2. Capital Improvement Project Committee**

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Capital Improvement Project Committee (CIPC) did not meet during the past fiscal year.

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.

Knowing results of the Feasibility Study could potentially affect the operation of the building, capital improvement expenditures during the past year have again been limited to only replacing items that failed or are critical to the efficient operation of the building. Once the Feasibility Study is completed and a course of action is determined, a plan for future capital improvement projects will be developed. The following projects have previously been considered and will be re-evaluated at the appropriate time:

- 1. HVAC Units.** No HVAC projects were undertaken during the past fiscal year. Preventive maintenance (PM) on the rooftop units continues to prolong their projected life expectancy. Due to the success of the preventive maintenance, the CIPC has decided to wait until a unit stops working before replacing it.
- 2. Replacement of Existing Light Switches to Energy Efficient Switches.** Although the CIPC approved a project to replace all light switches with motion-activated switches, it has been delayed due to the difficulty of finding switches that are compatible with the instant start ballasts that were installed as part of the energy efficient lighting upgrade several years ago. As information, there are ~ 125 light switches in the building consisting of both single pole and 3 –way switches and it the cost to replace all switches was previously estimated to be ~ \$6,500.00. Once this project is scheduled, staff will check to see if grants are available which could further reduce the 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 was completed in February of 2018. Excluding any required repairs, the cost of the various mandated annual tests/inspections is ~ \$3,500 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) a child care program 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 and sports programs, 5) birthday parties, 6) select programs for seniors 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 in the building.

**b) OPRFHS - Community Integrated Transitional Education (CITE) Program**

Due to the COVID-19 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 typically 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.
- 2. 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 attend classes at local colleges or work outside of the building.
- 3) 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 on a daily basis.

**c) Opportunity Knocks.**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Opportunity Knocks (OK) programs were closed from April 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 currently has a five (5) year lease with the Community Center that went into effect June 1, 2016. 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.

**Building Usage (continued)**

**c) Opportunity Knocks**

Opportunity Knocks is a local not for profit organization which provides programs and services for persons with developmental disabilities and celebrated its 11<sup>th</sup> 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 in order to increase program awareness and to strengthen the partnership between the agencies.

**d) River Forest School District 90**

The Community Center and RF School District 90 renewed their partnership agreement for the D90 Blended Preschool program that accommodates 3-5 year old participants as mandated by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Blended Preschool participants attend classes at the Community Center and the program has been well received and generated positive feedback.

**e) Special Events in the Building**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and mandated restrictions on group sizes, there were no special events held in the building during the past fiscal year. Prior to the pandemic, the following special events were typically held in the building during the year:

- a. **April** – RFCC Week of the Young Child with daily events and activities
- b. **May** – Celebrating Seniors week with various seminars and activities
- c. **July** - RF Township Assessor/Cook County Assessor taxpayer outreach seminar
- d. **October** – RFCC Halloween party attended by ~350 people
- e. **February** – RFCC Daddy Daughter Dance attended by ~400 people
- f. **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. As a result, the number of training sessions has increased substantially and multiple training sessions are typically being held in the building each month.
- g. **March** - RF Township Assessor/Cook County Assessor taxpayer outreach seminar

**f) Interior Building Improvements**

**Installation of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).** As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, modifications were made to the main entrance area to meet State mandated social distancing and personal safety requirements. Additionally, hand sanitizers were installed throughout the building in common areas, hallways and classrooms. New safety protocols included regularly scheduled cleanings and wipe-downs of surfaces, door handles and other points of contact. Masks were mandated for staff and program participants.

**Building Usage (continued)**

**g) 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 continued to be performed throughout the year to keep the exterior appearance in a presentable condition.

**h) Previously Initiated Projects - FY 2020-2021 Updates**

**a) Replacement of the 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 due to the precedence of other projects and, most recently, the Feasibility Study that is being undertaken. Room 202 is approximately 1250 square feet and has a laminate floor that is over 20 years old and showing significant signs of wear and tear. Since wall dividers and new window treatments were installed in the room in 2016 to accommodate additional programs offered by the Community Center and RF Township, the deteriorated condition of the floor is more noticeable. Overall, the laminate flooring has held up well and the recommendation is to replace the existing floor with another laminate floor product in a neutral color. The cost of this project was previously estimated to be ~ \$ 9,500.00 and includes the cost of tearing up and removing the old floor, prep work that may be needed and 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 to accommodate the additional cameras and enable the system to record both digital and analog cameras on the same system. The recommendation to upgrade the security system was 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 previously performed a site inspection of the premises and acknowledged that many security measures are already in place at the building. However, the Police Department also emphasized no security system is foolproof nor will it be able to prevent all crime. Although very few crimes have occurred at the building throughout the years, the Police Department suggested additional security cameras would be helpful and could act as a deterrent to crime. 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**

With the completion of the first floor building renovations and reconfiguration of the front entrance and office areas, improvements to the interior signage have been discussed with the various occupants in the building, including the Township and Assessor, Opportunity Knocks, OPRFHS, etc. Although discussions have been held about developing a coordinated signage plan throughout the building, this project has been deferred multiple times due to other priorities. Most importantly, while coordinated signage would be a welcome improvement, the primary reason this project has been deferred is because there is existing functional signage throughout the building.

i) **Miscellaneous**

a) **Roof**

During the past two years, several areas of the roof have deteriorated significantly and it has become increasingly more difficult to come up with “band-aid” type solutions until the Feasibility Study is completed. Areas around the west stairwell and the elevator shaft developed leaks which are currently being addressed. As discussed at the monthly Civic Center meetings, major roof repairs have been deferred until the Feasibility Study is completed. However, based on the frequency which new leaks are occurring, a long-term solution will need to be developed. Options for replacing the roof either in sections or in its entirety will need to be explored to determine the most cost-effective approach. 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 (except as noted above) the cost of additional preventive maintenance work will need to be compared to replacing all or selected sections. Since 2004 preventive maintenance has been undertaken annually and has effectively prolonged the life of the roof. Similar to several of the other items which have been addressed in this report, a more definitive course of action can be developed once the results of the Feasibility Study are known.

b) **Replacement of HVAC Equipment.** As previously addressed with the Civic Center Authority board, the components of the HVAC system in the building all 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 second floor as needed. With the exception of the two HVAC units that were 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. Since 2013, the following HVAC projects have been completed:

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

c) **Replacement of Miscellaneous HVAC Parts.** 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. During the fiscal year, there were service calls to replace or repair different HVAC components. The total cost for the miscellaneous repairs paid from the Capital Improvement fund was ~\$7,000.00. In addition to the amount paid from the Capital Improvement fund, the Community Center also paid ~\$8,500.00 for other HVAC repairs and maintenance items.