

Legislation Text

File #: 21-028, **Version:** 1

City Council Meeting Date: January 12, 2021

To: Mayor and City Council
City Administrator

From: Jayson Dwelle, Facilities Manager
David Bennett, Public Works Director/City Engineer

Review of City Hall Building Preliminary Improvement Concepts for Safety and Customer Interaction Changes.

Action Requested:

The Northfield City Council discuss the preliminary improvement concepts for City Hall.

Summary Report:

Northfield City Hall has been modified significantly over the last several years. Beginning with the large-scale remodel in 2013 followed by subsequent smaller departmental and room upgrades that have included cosmetic, customer service and safety enhancements. The proposed City Hall upgrades address several safety issues in the current building that we are presenting for discussion are a continuation of these ongoing efforts to improve the location.

Incidents involving city hall and workplace violence in recent history across a number of U.S. cities serve as reminders that there are basic physical building improvements that can be taken to safeguard officials and the public from potential violence while also improving customer service. The pandemic have provided additional focus and attention related to considering improvements that also can reduce the spread of airborne illness.

In the current layout several of the divisions does not allow for distancing or barriers for public health and safety concerns. While currently the COVID19 pandemic is the biggest threat, barriers also have the ability to increase individual safety with other airborne and droplet spread illnesses such as the common cold and flu. A redesign with reception areas with barriers increases safety from illness threats.

The redesign of reception areas also will assist in customer service, as customers know where to go and employees know which areas customers arrive at, increasing customer satisfaction. This redesign also reduces the possibility of customers wandering into offices as they often currently do, reducing the possibility of theft loss or confidential or private information being compromised.

The increased barriers and access measures assist in safety from acts of violence by restricting access and exposure, protecting employees. These measures allow quick access to allow customers in but also allow quick locking to reduce threat access. Violence in workplaces and targeted at government buildings continues to be a valid concern in communities of all sizes throughout the country.

Staff worked with ATS&R to formulate a plan that will remedy most, if not all of the safety, separation and dedicated areas for customer interaction. The plan calls for electronic door locks, partition walls and doors, and system furniture with glass barriers for the customer service areas. The layout of the building is challenging from a safety standpoint due to multiple entrances and no centralized reception area. The departmental areas are easier to secure and the plan calls for an opening in the wall to the hallway in the Community Development area that would become the central informational hub for City Hall.

If the project is phased, ATS&R is recommending a closely phased approach in such a way to keep the contractors mobilized on site to minimize extra expenses involved with re-mobilizing.

Rice County currently leases space on the second floor of City Hall, not all County Services are available in their northern service center however these are valuable services to the residents of Northfield. The proposed plan does indicate the City moving into Rice County space, however staff have been working with the County on this and no formal timetable has been set. The current lease agreement with Rice County is expired and is attached for reference. We are not recommending to work on a new lease while alternatives are being explored. There are significant space needs that would be filled with offices if and when that space becomes available.

Alternative Options:

We welcome suggestions of the plan or clarifications as we will be moving into more detailed cost estimating and financial planning in the coming months.

Financial Impacts:

The current complete project estimate is approximately \$544,000. ATS&R and Staff will continue to refine the number as we adjust the project and receive quotes for the work from contractors.

Staff will bring back a funding plan and more details of the, however one approach would be to spread the project phases over two fiscal years. If so, ATS&R has recommended a September 2021 bid date with the project to begin in November 2021 and continue through January 2022.

Staff anticipates more details of options for financing would be presented in June 2021 following completion of the Minnesota Legislature (scheduled to adjourn May 17) as well as near final completion of the 2020 City independent financial audit. This will be a time where the City reserve funds will be more clear to determine funding as well as a time when the budget process is scheduled to begin. If a project were pursued for 2021 we would need a budget amendment. Alternatively, if it is worked into future years we'd plan it in conjunction with the 2022 budget process.

Tentative Timelines:

- June 2021 - Review of updated construction plan scope, cost, financing and schedule options.