



Office of the County Executive

Bob Ziegelbauer, County Executive

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July 6, 2023

To: Manitowoc County Board Supervisors:
From: Bob Ziegelbauer, Manitowoc County Executive
Re: Courthouse Dome Advisory meeting of June 28

Hello,

A couple of issues came up during the Courthouse Dome Advisory meeting on June 28 that I would like to address.

This project is a “Once in a Century” project. The Manitowoc County Courthouse is almost 120 years old and can easily serve us for another 100 years. This project needs to be done now, or in the near future.

Maintenance was discussed at the meeting and several misconceptions and misunderstandings were apparent. Gerry Neuser, our Director of Public Works, authored the attached memo explaining the misconceptions and setting the record straight. Maintenance of the Courthouse is NOT an issue. The courthouse is NOT an old and decrepit building. It is a modern up-to-date building. We’ve often said that it is a “new building under a 117 year old dome”.

The county’s financial condition continues to be misunderstood and set up as an imaginary obstacle. As a going concern we will always have debt to finance capital assets of long life spans (bridges, highways, buildings) to match more clearly the benefits to taxpayers with the cost. It’s good business to do that. Manitowoc County is in EXCELLENT financial condition. We have continued low debt, less than 7% of the state maximum and we did \$109 million dollars in capital improvements in the past 17 years while borrowing less than \$38 million dollars during that time. We don’t squander our resources.

Please re-read the “Frequently Asked Questions” piece we put together and distributed to the County Board. We put a lot of work into that. It answers most of the questions, and is on the County website.

[Courthouse-Dome-Project-FAQ-Document-x18.pdf \(manitowoccountywi.gov\)](#)

Thank you for the time and attention.



Public Works Department

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TO: The Manitowoc County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Gerry Neuser, Public Works Director
DATE: July 6, 2023
RE: Building & Equipment Maintenance & Replacement Programs

At recent meetings of the Ad Hoc Courthouse Dome Advisory Committee statements have been made regarding a supposed lack of maintenance of County facilities from members who have no knowledge of the comprehensive maintenance programs in place.

As many County Board Supervisors attended these meetings, I'd like to take the opportunity to set the record straight and outline what we do operationally and how we strategically plan for facilities equipment and systems replacements.

In-House Preventative Maintenance (PM) Program

Every day, every maintenance technician walks through their assigned mechanical rooms to record equipment readings, and visually and audibly inspect the mechanical equipment in them.

On weekends and holidays this duty is assigned to staff on a rotating "weekend duty" schedule.

Custodial staff cleans every restroom in all buildings and removes trash and recycling from every office and common areas. They rotate vacuuming, dusting, washing windows, etc. throughout the week

Every month, every maintenance technician in the department receives a PM packet.

This packet contains forms and checklists for all mechanical equipment that has to be inspected and serviced. This PM work is accomplished throughout the month in addition to taking care of their other general buildings & grounds maintenance and repair duties.

Typical PM items common to most of our facilities are: air handling units, air conditioning condensers, boilers and furnaces, pumps, HVAC air compressors & control systems, building exhaust fans, fire alarm systems, generators, emergency lighting systems, fire extinguishers, and uninterruptible power supplies.

There are also forms for inspections of all the physical building components. Typical items are roofs and roofing systems, windows, exterior and interior doors and wall systems, pavement, etc.

We have the same type of program in place for our Public Safety Radio System towers and shelters.

Every month we do a janitorial quality assurance (QA) inspection of our buildings to make sure our custodians are doing a thorough job of cleaning our facilities. They are rated on approximately (50) different areas of their building(s).

This constant maintenance and attention to detail has prolonged the service life of our equipment and systems and allowed us to plan for proactive replacements vs reactive emergency replacements of equipment and systems.

Contracted Preventative Maintenance

There are a number of systems that require periodic inspections and/or service by specialized technicians, and we contract for these services. Typical items are fire sprinkler systems, seasonal HVAC tune-ups and chiller service, integrated security system service, annual fire alarm & smoke detector testing, and monthly pest control.

Mechanical Systems & Building Component Replacement Plan

Every year we budget approximately \$300,000 to replace mechanical equipment or building components that are coming to the end of their service life. This is a healthy amount and we are able to continually maintain and improve our buildings in this way.

Items that fall into this category are valued in the \$5,000 to \$50,000 range. Typical items are HVAC equipment, small roof replacements, interior finishes, plumbing fixture replacements, lighting upgrades, etc., and are listed in the annual budget book.

10-Year Capital Replacement Program

Starting in 2016 we implemented a recurring 10-year capital equipment replacement plan to replace items that in the past were of a higher dollar value (most in the \$100,000+ range) and were often replaced as part of bond issues. The amount budgeted for these project is approximately \$300,000 annually. Since 2016 we have completed over \$5.4 million of these types of projects.

Typical projects in this program are elevator modernizations, large roofing projects and large-sized mechanical equipment. A complete listing of all of these projects is included in the annual budget book.

Bonded Capital Improvements

From time to time the County has borrowed money to construct new buildings or substantially renovate existing buildings. Often in the case of renovation projects, major building elements (roofs, windows, underground service utilities, large mechanical equipment) are included in the construction projects. Examples would be the Human Services Building remodels in 1991 and 2015, the Health Dept. Building remodel in 2013, the Heritage Center remodel in 2016 and the UWGB-Manitowoc Campus remodel in 2017-2018.

All of the above items could not happen without the support of the County Executive and County Board of Supervisors through the budget process.

The entire DPW staff takes their responsibility to maintain our facilities very seriously and has a deep sense of ownership for them. We sincerely appreciate your continuing support.

How does maintenance relate to the current Courthouse project?

The Courthouse is a well maintained building. It's been continuously updated throughout the years to adapt to societal changes. As the County Executive has said numerous times, it's a new building under a 120 year old dome.

The projects being contemplated are not maintenance projects, but replacement projects for materials that have exceeded their life expectancy.

The dome's copper cladding is 120 years old as are the building materials (structural block and steel) behind the cladding. The copper has reached the end of its life-cycle. We're unsure of the condition of the structural block and steel because it's hidden behind the copper. That being the case, the prudent approach is to hope for the best but prepare for the worst. That is why the budget for this section of the work is as high as it is. This is a monumental project on a monumental building, with the expectation that the new materials will last at least another 100 years.

The windows and HVAC systems are over 50 years old. They have been maintained throughout but are now at the end of their service life. It is time to replace both.

The Plan.

As the Courthouse was nearing its centennial in 2006, we commissioned a Historic Structures Report (HSR) to ascertain the condition of the building envelope and develop a replacement plan for those building elements. The plan prioritized the different elements based on their condition at that time.

- Phase 1 was replacement of the (3) exterior staircases, the low-sloped (rubber) roof, and the copper promenade plinth and balustrade levels of the dome.
 - This work was accomplished in 2010
- Phase 2 was tuck-pointing of the entire building's stone facades
 - This work was completed in 2016
- Phase 3 is the replacement of the copper cladding on the dome clearstory, drum, lantern, and some sort of recladding of the upper dome itself (with glass, copper, or stainless steel)
 - This is the project currently being planned.

This was and is a comprehensive phased-plan to maintain the building.

It is our hope that the County Board will fund this last phase of the project and protect the County's greatest asset for the next century.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.