

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
**INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION**

**DATE:** March 14, 2016

**TO:** Supervisor Michael Mayo, Sr., Chair, Transportation, Public Works and Transit

**FROM:** Jeremy Theis, Director, Department of Administrative Services - Facilities Management Division

**SUBJECT:** Courthouse Façade (Informational Only)

**BACKGROUND**

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, a section of the Courthouse façade approximately 7' in width separated and fell to the ground. The likely cause was water infiltration behind a previous repair that froze, expanded, and then fell during a thaw cycle.

The Facilities Management Division (FMD), Operations & Maintenance Section, initiated a response plan. That plan included; immediate inspection of the failure location, fencing surrounding the structure until further inspection was completed, and planning for further inspections to take place.

The immediate inspection was completed the next day, February 20<sup>th</sup>, by façade inspection professionals. During the hands-on inspection, five distress locations within reach of the 75' boom truck were identified. This verified Operation and Maintenance's decision the day prior to provide fencing around the entire structure versus just at the location of failure.

The fencing is to remain in place until a complete hands-on inspection occurs and all potential unsafe and imminently hazardous conditions are repaired. We expect this to occur over the coming months and will be planning to expedite to the greatest extent possible.

**FAÇADE EXAMINATION REQUIREMENT**

Façade inspections are required by City of Milwaukee Ordinance 275-32-13. Typically they do not require 100% hands-on inspections. For buildings which are 15 years or older and 5 or more stories, a "critical examination" is required, which is defined here and is a lesser scope than that of a 100% hands-on inspection.

From City of Milwaukee Ordinance 275-32-13 c-8:

A "critical examination" means a close-up visual examination of the condition of one scaffold drop per elevation of façade, or parts thereof, performed by or under the direct supervision of a professional employed by the owner or agent for the purpose of determining if remedial work is required. The façade area which cannot be examined through a close-up visual examination shall be subject to a remote examination.

While a critical façade examination does not include a 100% hands-on inspection which is much more time consuming and ultimately expensive, FMD is recommending a 100% hands-on inspection be performed based on the findings on February 20<sup>th</sup>.

A 100% hands-on inspection would meet and exceed the requirements of 275-32-13. It will also identify any further repairs that are required where a lesser examination may leave them unidentified. This may potentially lead to a much larger repair scope and cost, but needs to be identified and prioritized appropriately. Further patch repairs are not recommended due to evidence of previous instances failing and FMD will be seeking full restoration scope of repairs versus additional patches.

Given the history of the Courthouse façade and what was identified on February 20<sup>th</sup>, as facilities professionals, we have no choice but to recommend baselining the entire façade through 100% inspection and produce a repair plan. The inspection, fencing, and engineering support costs will near \$500K. The 100% hands-on inspection itself is estimated around \$330K. The repair plan will be developed based on the inspection findings and could very well yield high cost requirements.

It is worth noting that we estimate a critical façade examination costing more around \$30K. If we can baseline the Courthouse façade through the 100% hands-on inspection and effectuate long term repairs, we will be looking at \$30K every five years for inspection of the Courthouse versus what seems to be a trend of larger sums at smaller intervals by performing partial inspections and shorter duration repairs.

## **FACILITIES MANAGEMENT BUDGET STATUS**

Facilities Management operates and maintains over \$600M of estimated plant replacement value in building improvements alone. In order to effectively maintain the structures, these efforts must be performed by professional services vendors with follow-on repairs completed by contracted means. The FMD budget does not contain enough contingency funding to provide the flexibility associated with surge efforts such as these. In addition, the Facilities Management Division is managing a \$377K budget cut from the 1% budget reduction amendment. For these reasons, once costs are further identified, FMD plans to request funding support from unallocated contingency in the months ahead.

FMD will not delay work based on a potential transfer. We have the ability to temporarily absorb the inspection efforts, but that will negatively impact other planned work until or if a transfer is approved. The follow on repair effort will likely exceed FMD's budget authority, but that is unknown until the inspection is complete.

## **PROPERTY INSURANCE CHANGE IMPACT**

Prior to 2016 this work would have likely been covered through the State's Local Government Property Insurance Fund. This was the case in 2010 when a similar incident occurred. In that case, the piece was much larger and led to a major repair project that was overseen by the Risk Management staff.

The change in property insurance coverage is likely the reason these facility related contingency requests are occurring more frequently. The County currently operates within a property insurance policy that has a \$500K deductible and even if this loss exceeds \$500K, this particular set of circumstances is not considered a covered peril. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the County budget alone to cover the expenses.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The FMD, Architecture, Engineering, and Environmental Services Section, is posting a Request for Proposals to complete the inspection of the Courthouse as well as critical examinations of the Criminal Justice Facility and Safety Building.

The results of those examinations will 'bucket' identified elevations and repairs as:

1. Unsafe and imminently hazardous
2. Safe with an ordinary repair and maintenance program
3. Safe

A repair plan will be generated.

All 'unsafe and imminently hazardous conditions' will be required to be repaired prior to removing the fencing. It will be FMD's goal to make those repairs immediately to limit access costs. For this reason, there is a substantial contingency on the initial project nearing 40%. That is the difference between the \$330K inspection estimate and potential \$500K funding request.

All 'safe with an ordinary repair and maintenance program' locations will be prioritized and costed appropriately to plan for deliberate repairs.

The reports will be submitted to the City of Milwaukee per the Ordinance requirements.

These matters are the most critical of everything that FMD is responsible for at the County. We will continue to communicate throughout the process via the chain of command and the Transportation, Public Works, and Transit Committee. We are working towards decade-long solutions for this Historic Courthouse, not patches and repairs. That said, that can take a little longer and be more costly. Given that the structure is over 85 years old and we plan to have it for 85+ more years, we must address this appropriately.

## RECOMMENDATION

The Director of Facilities Management Division respectfully requests this report to be received and placed on file.



Jeremy Thels, Director  
Facilities Management Division, DAS

cc: Chris Abele, County Executive  
Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, County Board of Supervisors  
Supervisor John F. Weishan, Jr., Vice Chair, Transportation, Public Works and Transit Committee  
Supervisor Willie Johnson, Jr., Co-chair, Finance, Personnel, and Audit Committee  
Supervisor Jim "Luigi" Schmitt, Co-chair, Finance, Personnel, and Audit Committee  
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