

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE

Inter-Office Communication

Date: December 20, 2024

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairperson, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Sean Hayes, Director, Architecture, Engineering and Environmental Services

Subject: Informational report - update on Architecture, Engineering, and Environmental Services (AE&ES) Progress and Future Plans

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

This informational report serves as an update on the Architecture, Engineering, and Environmental Services (AE&ES) team, continuing the information presented in Board Reports 22-953 and 24-112.

POLICY

Chapter 56 of Milwaukee County Code of Ordinances states:

Policy. Uniformity of bid documents, contracts, and procedures for construction of public works projects and centralization in one (1) office of related activities is essential to efficient management of public construction programs.

Chapter 44 of Milwaukee County Code of Ordinances designates the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) as the authority for administering such (non-transportation) public works contracts. The Architecture, Engineering and Environmental Services (AE&ES) section of the Facility Management Division (FMD) of DAS is the longstanding responsible organization within Milwaukee County for public works projects within the County capital program. AE&ES has well-established procedures for administering projects within compliance of all federal, State, and County contracting and procure codes.

OVERVIEW

In July 2022, the Department of Administrative Services provided an informational report to the Board on the AE&ES staffing situation and its impact on the capital program (Board Report 22-953). At that time, AE&ES was facing a staffing resource crisis. The entire AE&ES leadership team had recently retired or was poised to retire, and several other positions turned over. Simultaneously, an influx of over \$100 million in ARPA-funded projects more than doubled the normal capital program workload. The combination of increased demands and high turnover required AE&ES to develop a strategic plan to address these challenges.

The July 2022 report outlined a strategic plan to address these challenges, and since then, AE&ES has made steady and meaningful progress, as highlighted in Board Report 24-112. We have enhanced how we deliver projects, strengthened collaboration with internal departments, and embraced a culture of continuous improvement. These efforts have stabilized our operations and set the stage for sustained success. This report will outline the AE&ES team's achievements in 2024 and preview our goals for 2025 and beyond.

1. Project Management Excellence

AE&ES continues to lead transformative projects across Milwaukee County, showcasing expertise in managing complex initiatives from inception to completion:

- **Portfolio Leadership:** Managing over 200 active projects, ranging from \$10,000 to over \$100 million, including the *Investing in Justice Project*, *Forensic Science Center*, *Vel Phillips Juvenile Justice Center*, the *New Coggs Facility*, the *North Shop Facility*, the *Zoo Rhino and Penguin facilities*, among others.
- **Enhanced Reporting and Tracking:** Adopted project management tools to improve portfolio visibility, enable early risk detection, and streamline resource allocation to maximize efficiency.
- **Innovative Contracting Practices:** Leveraged project delivery methods such as Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) and expanded master service agreements to accelerate design phases, reduce risk, and yield consistent outcomes.
- **Closing Projects:** Focused on closing projects efficiently to ensure resources are available for future initiatives.

2. Superior Customer Service

AE&ES prioritizes client satisfaction by delivering tailored solutions and fostering strong partnerships with Milwaukee County departments:

- **Proactive Client Engagement:** Refined client management strategies, including establishing dedicated departmental client managers to ensure clear communication and alignment with department needs.
- **Rapid Response to Urgent Needs:** Strengthened Time and Materials contract administration, providing facility managers with greater vendor options and faster solutions for critical maintenance issues.
- **Comprehensive Support:** Delivered technical expertise across all departments, assisting with environmental compliance, facility maintenance, and project scoping for future needs.
- **Equity-Focused Service Delivery:** Strengthened partnerships with the Office of Economic Inclusion to develop and implement strategies that successfully promote TBE (Targeted Business Enterprise) and DBE (Disadvantaged Business Enterprise) participation in County projects.

3. Culture of Continuous Improvement

At the foundation of all our efforts is AE&ES's commitment to fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. 2024 key initiatives include:

- **Lean Six Sigma and Kaizen:** Trained 10 staff members in Lean Six Sigma to enhance process efficiency. Implemented a Kaizen event that reduced contracting timelines by several weeks. Additionally, we initiated a continuous improvement process to streamline project closeout.
- **90-Day Rocks Program:** Launched a structured quarterly planning program, enabling the leadership team to review progress and set priorities. Since Spring 2024, this initiative has delivered over 30 actionable improvements that might otherwise have been delayed or overlooked.
- **Streamlined Workflows:** Introduced tools such as Smartsheet to enhance request intake and tracking, increasing accountability, transparency, and operational efficiency.

Looking Ahead

As we look toward 2025 and beyond, AE&ES is focused on leveraging teamwork, enhancing quality control, ensuring efficient project closeouts, and advancing sustainability to address Milwaukee County's immediate and long-term infrastructure challenges.

- **All-In on Teamwork:** Collaboration remains at the heart of our approach. By going "all-in" on teamwork, we aim to provide project managers with the support they need, foster team development and growth, and continue to improve customer service. This focus will also enhance our ability to meet budget and schedule performance targets across all projects.
- **Commitment to Quality Control:** AE&ES will prioritize setting targeted check-in points within projects to identify and address potential issues early, minimizing risks and ensuring successful project outcomes.
- **Closing the Loop on Projects:** We remain committed to driving project closeouts, ensuring we close more projects than we gain each year. This effort will aim to eliminate projects that linger without resolution, allowing us to reallocate resources to new priorities and maintain an efficient project portfolio.
- **Advancing Sustainability:** Sustainability will be a key focus in 2025 as we work to incorporate sustainable design guidelines into our planning and design processes. This effort supports Milwaukee County's Climate Action 2050 Plan and ensures that infrastructure projects align with long-term environmental and community goals.

AE&ES is prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead. With a skilled and dedicated team, a commitment to continuous improvement, and a focus on collaboration, we are well-equipped to deliver impactful projects that align with Milwaukee County's vision. Our ability to adapt, innovate, and excel ensures we will continue to meet the needs of today while building a sustainable and equitable tomorrow.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability.

FISCAL EFFECT

None, report is informational only.

TERMS

None, report is informational only.

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITEES

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ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: 2024 AE&ES Brochure

Attachment 2: Project Portfolio Work in Progress