

## **Community Center to Get a Facelift**

Not many people realize it, but last year was the Community Center's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. And like many of us who have passed that milestone, it is starting to show its age. Just last summer, the cooling system finally gave out so the last two months of summer were spent with no air conditioning since the condensing units on the roof are so old that repair parts are no longer available.

Over the past two or three summers, minor roof leaks have shown up during torrential rain falls and spring thaw runoff, but fortunately those leaks just required easy patchwork on the roof. The leaks last summer, however, were more widespread and frequent so building staff had to take care of protecting computers and office equipment when rain was in the forecast. Further inspection of the roof revealed that the areas that need repair are so numerous that repairing is no longer cost effective.

Anyone who drives by and looks at the building can also spot several pieces of the 80's vintage wood siding ready to come off in the next windstorm. After nailing down loose pieces repeatedly over the past years, repair of the siding is also no longer cost effective.

In order to address the current state of the community center building, City Council began working with Mutchler Bartram Architects out of Fargo late last summer. In conjunction with MBA, a wish list was compiled and cost estimates made for several potential projects to make the necessary updates to the community center. Once that list was completed, City Council reviewed the options and prioritized which projects needed to be completed within a budget that the City could afford without an additional levy on tax payers.

City Council decided that upgrading the heating and cooling system was the top priority given the fact that the current air conditioning needed to be replaced. The new system involves the installation of four HVAC units on the roof of the community center with minimal interior work done with the existing ductwork within the building. This will result in four different heating and cooling zones in the building so the temperature can be more customized to each zone and whether or not that zone is in use.

The other high priority was the roof. The current "membrane" (covering) will be replaced and during that process additional insulation will be installed to increase efficiency for heating and cooling. Any of the current insulation that has been damaged during previous leakage will also be replaced. The new roof will have a useful life of about 20 to 25 years.

The brown siding on the building is the original siding that was installed when the building was new in 1982. The building has been painted a few times over the last 40 years, and over the course of the past few years, loose siding has had to be fastened down again. The siding will be replaced with steel siding that will be much more durable than the current wood siding, and additional insulation will also be added. The current brick portions of the siding will not be covered or replaced. As part of the siding project, new windows will also be installed since the windows are also original construction and not as efficient as current windows.

The final thing to be addressed during the project is the replacement of the south side door off of Highway 32. The current doors are painted hollow metal doors and the current condition of the doors is poor since seals are failing, and the closers make it difficult to operate the doors in compliance with accessibility requirements. Handicap accessible doors with door openers will be installed to make for easier access for visitors to the community center.

The total cost of the project including engineer fees and financing costs will be around \$800,000 and the City is currently going through the necessary steps to acquire the necessary financing. The City will likely issue fifteen-year general obligation bonds at 4.25% interest. The annual payment on the bonds will be around \$79,000 and, as stated above, that amount will not be added as a property tax levy. The City regularly budgets between \$50,000 and \$80,000 for capital improvements so that will be used to make the annual payment on the bonds.

The community center is a valuable asset to the residents of Fertile and the surrounding area. In addition to the City Offices, the community center is home to the library, food shelf, and Riverview Rehab Clinic. In addition, there are many civic and charitable groups that utilize the community center for their regular meetings, crafting groups, exercise class, and many other gatherings. The auditorium, small meeting room, and kitchen are also used frequently for birthday parties, family reunions, community events, class reunions, fundraisers, regional fire meetings, and graduation receptions. While this renovation project is costly, it is vital that the work is done to preserve the building and ensure that it's available for another 40 years of community use.

Anyone who has questions or comments on this project is welcome to call the City Office at 945-3136 or contact a City Council member.