

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: April 20, 2009

Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: Community Center Tower Repair – Information

FROM: Ann Chaney, Community Development Director
Barry Whittaker, Project Manager
Beth Pollard, City Administrator

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That Council refer design review of repair options for the Community Center/Library tower to the Planning & Zoning Commission, for a recommendation to the City Council.

BACKGROUND

Albany's Community Center was originally built in 1992. In 2002-03, the City performed extensive rehabilitation work on the exterior of the Community Center due to water intrusion, particularly on the stair tower and south (Marin) and west (Evelyn) walls. In early 2006, City staff observed a water leak in the Community Center tower that became evident when water bubbles appeared behind the paint of the interior tower wall. This observation came about a week after the severe rains and windstorm that occurred on December 30, 2005. Wiss, Janney, Elstner (WJE), a expert water damage firm, was hired to assist in diagnosing the water intrusion problem in the tower, and work with staff to develop a remedy. In the exploration work, significant water damage was found over approximately half the stair tower wall areas. Since July 1, 2004, the City has spent approximately \$260,000 on this project. In the earlier times, it was spent to further a repair project that would have included replacing the windows in the stair tower. Since the new leak was detected at the beginning of 2006, the monies have been spent in analyzing and exploring the water damage.

DISCUSSION

WJE has prepared plans and specifications for use in reconstruction of the tower, and we are approximately ready to solicit bids. The most important proposed change is to incorporate a "drainage & ventilation" fabric into the wall section, between the new stucco and the structural plywood underneath it. This material creates a ventilation cavity between the vapor barrier (the building paper that is part of the stucco system) and the

stucco exterior. A second change will be to eliminate the existing insulation from the exterior walls of the stair tower. The interior of the stair tower is unheated and uncooled.

Given the repeated failure of the tower, there is some desire to consider removing at least portions of the tower to reduce the likelihood of further failure in the future. WJE believes that the tower can be successfully repaired without further modification, but also recognizes that there might be some benefit in the elimination of the difficult tower-top construction details.

At the time of the first tower repairs in 2002, the simple changing of the colors on the exterior walls generated a considerable community interest and involvement in the project. We might anticipate such interest again in a proposed change in the tower design. However, in order to construct the repairs before next winter and avoid the wrapped tower for another year, the City needs to settle the design strategy within the next month.

ANALYSIS

Prior to going to bid for these repairs, it is perhaps worth considering whether to make some modifications to the tower design. Elimination of the tower in its entirety has been suggested, but it provides an enclosure of the fire exit from the basement, an essential function for the building. The exit from the basement simply comes up to a door in the main entry lobby. Above the main building roof level, however, the tower's function is largely decorative. It does provide access to HVAC equipment on the roof, but that access could be provided more conventionally from a ladder and hatch, as it is elsewhere on the roof to both the Library and Community Center sides.

Among the possibilities for modification to the tower are the possibility of removing the "flying beams" and their support posts at the corners of the tower at the very top of the tower. This would remove the most difficult elements in the building, but affects the tower appearance.

Other modifications could be considered at that same level – such as perhaps leaving the flying beams and posts, but 'moving them inside' by enclosing the top in conventional windows, walls and roof (flat, or pitched like the skylights). Elimination of the flying beams and their support posts would likely not add to the costs of repairs, with the increased costs of demolition and repair being offset by saved costs in not having to repair the flying beams and their support posts. Enclosing the top of the tower in walls, windows and roof would add these costs to the repairs. The resulting repair to the flying beams would also be cheaper in this version, inasmuch as they would move inside, and it is simply an issue of interior construction. However, the new window walls and roof like would add in the order of \$50,000, perhaps somewhat more, to the cost of repair.

Another variation of the above theme would be to lower the tower and enclose the top with a roof structure. This, too, would be expected to add perhaps \$25,000 to \$50,000 to the cost of the repair.

Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission be asked to review the tower design options at its meeting of April 28, 2009, towards a solution that meet the structural needs of the building, protection against water intrusion, and good design, within a reasonable budget.

The City has filed a lawsuit against the repair contractor from three to four years ago. Because of that action, open discussion on this item will be limited.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

Not applicable at this time.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

At this point, the lawsuit against the repair contractor has not been resolved, so proceeding with the repairs would require the City to use other funds that it has available for the time being.

Attachment

Photographic examples of replacement options (Top photo: Replacement to prior design; middle photo: removal of “flying beams;” bottom photo: tower near to building height)