

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****August 16, 2022**

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**SUBJECT: WILL ROGERS MEMORIAL CENTER CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE**

The purpose of this Informal Report is to update the City Council on the status Capital Improvement Programs at the Will Rogers Memorial Center.

The Will Rogers Memorial Center is one of the preeminent equestrian facilities in the United States. Per a recent economic impact study performed by the Highland Group, the 17 buildings that make up the WRMC complex host approximately 111 events annually, generating over 800,000 visitor days and approximately \$331,000,000 in Direct Economic Impact.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenue collections, capital improvement projects at WRMC were suspended for most of FY2020 and FY2021. When hospitality market conditions improved in the early fall of 2021, and there was certainty that the Culture and Tourism Fund could meet its debt obligations for FY2021, the WRMC Capital Projects program was re-started.

The budgets for approved and proposed capital projects for WRMC is as follows:

- FY22 Budgeted Projects: \$8,330,771
- FY22 Approved ARPA Projects: \$5,546,150
- FY22 Additional Requested ARPA Projects: \$7,850,000

Planned capital investments as described in the WRMC Capital Improvement Plan as follows:

- FY23: \$1,875,000
- FY24: \$4,080,000
- FY25: \$5,195,000
- FY26: \$6,405,000
- FY27: \$9,490,000

Note that the FY23 Proposed Capital Budget is light. This is intentional, as the WRMC Team needs to make progress on the 24 projects currently budgeted before adding additional capital projects to the queue.

Additionally, the FWSSR will be approaching the City later this summer about another partnership to rebuild the WRMC Sheep and Swine Barn. The working number for this project is \$40,000,000, with the City and FWSSR splitting the cost of annual debt service payments. This arrangement follows previous deals between the FWSSR and City to build the Tower Promenade and renovate Cattle Barns 1 & 2.

If the Culture and Tourism Funds have the debt capacity to fund this project, the project would start after the conclusion of the 2024 FWSSR and conclude before the 2025 FWSSR. Staff is currently working with the FWSSR to evaluate this proposal.

The following are some observations about capital programs at WRMC:

- The 17 buildings on the 120-acre site require a lot of upkeep. The original venues at WRMC are now 86 years old. The nature of the events hosted at WRMC creates a significant amount of wear and tear on the facilities.

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- The Culture and Tourism Funds created a dedicated revenue stream for WRMC and FWCC capital projects, creating the opportunity to catch up on the significant backlog of capital needs for both facilities.
- Because the venues are busy nearly every day of the year, there is a challenge with scheduling capital projects into gaps in the schedule.
- Many of the current projects budgeted at WRMC are back-of-house investments. WRMC Customers don't necessarily see this work, but benefit from it when completed.
- The proposed ARPA projects would address two significant needs. The Coliseum Concourse Renovations would be a project WRMC customers would immediately notice. The Coliseum Air Handler Replacement would replace equipment that dates back to the 1970s.

Additionally, PED has a new Capital Projects Manager. Keith Chisolm (Lieutenant Colonel, US Army, Retired) has brought a new energy and organization to PED's Capital Improvement program. We are starting to see the benefits of Keith's experience in some new efficiencies in moving projects from Budget to Completion.

PED is in the process of soliciting proposals to update the WRMC Capital Needs Assessment published in 2018. We expect a consultant to begin working with the WRMC Team on this engagement in FY2023. As of June 1, approximately 40 capital projects have been completed at WRMC that were identified in the 2018 Needs Assessment. As noted above, an additional 24 WRMC capital projects are underway.

If you have any questions or concerns related to this effort, please contact Michael Crum, Director of the Public Events Department, at 817-392-2501.

**David Cooke**  
**City Manager**