

Yes, City Hall hasn't been open to the public since the afternoon of October 12, 2010. The fire that started that afternoon took us all by surprise and we had a disaster on our hands. A lot of work was happening behind the scenes, a lot of work that the general public wasn't aware of. Employees not only lost their work space, but city records that we often refer to were soaked with water. Computers and printers were immersed in water. Desks and chairs were wet and dirty from falling plaster. The list could go on and on. Within 12 hours, Servpro started the dry out process of the walls and woodwork of the historic building. EVERY piece of paper was taken to an off-site location to undergo a special dry out process to be returned to us at a later date. EVERY computer/printer was taken to be dried out and returned to staff. Off-site backup of files insured that we didn't lose any data that we had pre-fire. The mural in the Commission Chambers and pictures/artwork seen throughout City Hall were also saved and preserved and are awaiting their return. Staff took on different roles in the immediately following the fire, ordering rental furniture, getting cell phones and two-way radios for staff to communicate, ordering supplies, and looking for temporary locations to set up offices for our displaced offices.

The dry out process didn't take a few days like it typically takes in a house, it was a long process. In fact, it took three months. The walls and ceilings in City Hall are two feet thick solid concrete, or layers upon layers of brick, making the process difficult. After the initial dry out, there were two additional water incidents stemming from uncovered roof areas during storm events that took place, so the process needed to start all over again.

After the dry out phase was complete, we needed to take a fiscally responsible look at the building and analyze what we needed to do to bring the building up to date, according to code, but still keep the historic look. Many people comment on the expense of City Hall, or question why are we putting money into the building, and in turn laying Police or Fire personnel off. Quite frankly, one has nothing to do with the other. The City is fully covered with insurance for the repair of the building and contents.

Major discussions were held with multiple architects, engineers, contractors, electricians, etc., to assess what was needed to reopen the building. Code issues, such as electrical and plumbing, are driving most of the delays that you are seeing today. At this point, all bids have been received for the various trades (electrical, plumbing, carpentry, flooring, plastering, painting, fire suppression, etc.), and once we resolve the electrical issue, the contractors will hit the floor running.

While the ceilings were out, the City advantage of timing to replace the chiller, which was 26 years old, and the boiler, which was 33 years old. There was a significant cost savings to do this while the ceilings were exposed to put in new duct work. The City would have incurred additional demolition costs to replace duct work if we opted to do this work at an alternate time. Due to the condition and age of the existing HVAC systems they were marginally operating to provide adequate service. The equipment had exceeded the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) rated service life. A new HVAC system for City Hall will improve the thermal efficiency and the air quality environment. We needed to consider

replacement at this time before a major failure happened. A typical day at City Hall consisted of freezing temperatures on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor to overheating temperatures on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. The building was a constant work in progress to monitor and keep an appropriate temperature for employees and residents. Yes, the price was approximately \$1.5 million dollars but it needs to heat/cool 56,493 square feet of area. It will reduce the city's utility bills and will regulate the air temperature throughout City Hall.

The City Commission also approved additional monies, approximately \$450,000 for a new generator, fire pump upgrade, attic dry fire sprinkler system, acoustic treatment in the Commission Chambers, new Commission Chambers public seating and post infill's for the handrails. The present generator was at the end of its life expectancy and wasn't adequate to handle the entire building. Fire suppression was out dated and not up to code for today's standard. The acoustic treatment in the Chambers is needed for public meetings. And the post in-fills are needed for safety reasons. All of these issues would have had to be dealt with in the next few years, so the time was perfect while the building is down to bare-bones.

To cover the cost of the seats being replaced in the Commission Chambers, we are having an "adopt-a-seat" campaign, similar to what the State Theater did years ago. Seats are being sold for \$250 each.

Flooring was also looked at, as beautiful wood floors were uncovered in numerous offices. While some offices will be carpeted once again, other office floors will be refinished and left uncovered. Insurance monies allowed for carpeting will be used in other areas to refinish the flooring to its original luster.

When City Hall reopens, you will see all new "old" lighting. We have received grant monies to cover the cost of replacing the current lighting with the historic Newell post lights that once hung in City Hall in the 1800's. No city funds were used for this and the funding we received is specific to lighting.

Consumers Energy is also on board, helping the City with incentives on the HVAC system, insulation and electrical.

The largest financial factor is the Historic Tax Credit that the City is receiving from the State of Michigan for the investment. The City was able to use the insurance money proceeds, roof project and the front door projects to apply for a tax credit. We received approval for \$6,331,967 worth of expenses, netting the amount of \$1,156,709 in tax credits for the project. This is great news and a win for the City!

If you are wondering why are lights on in City Hall at night, simply said...it is for security reasons. There are building walk-throughs (MIOSHA required) at night, checking for water, fire, smoke, etc...Going forward, we will be more cognizant and scale back to minimal lighting.

Believe me, I, just like our employees and YOU can't wait to go back to City Hall, but this process has had us slow down and take a look at the building and what the needs are. We have been given a 6-8 month return date once full reconstruction starts. We are relocating several offices to accommodate the public. The highly visited Treasurer's Office is moving in with the Account's Receivable Department on the first floor. Community Development is coming to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor from the 4<sup>th</sup>. Construction Services (formerly known as Engineering) and Planning Departments are merging into an office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The Building Department will be located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, while the Accounting offices will be relocated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. With no city employees working on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor anymore, those offices will be available for lease, creating an income source for the City.

Once City Hall is open for business, everyone will be invited to an open house. You will finally get to see the "treasures" that we uncovered....and are keeping uncovered for all to see and enjoy.

Dana L. Muscott, MMC, CPM  
Deputy City Manager of Administrative Services/City Clerk