



Parks, Recreation & Facilities Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City Hall Building Renovations Beginning, Groundbreaking Event April 4 *City Meetings Temporarily Relocated*

OWATONNA, Mar. 15, 2022 – Come to City Hall on April 4 at 4:30 pm to see the Council Chambers for the final time in its current state. A groundbreaking event will be held to kick off renovations of this space that will be occurring over the next several months.

Last year, a decision was made to renovate the Council Chambers area to allow it to better serve the community's current needs. This space was originally used as an auditorium for the State Public School. Then, it was modified in the 1970s when the City took ownership of the building and began using this room for its public meetings.

The renovation project will achieve the following:

- Provide a more convenient American Disability Act (ADA) compliant, accessible entry point and restrooms.
- Improve capabilities to broadcast public meetings live online and through the Public Access, Education & Government Channel with better audio and video quality and for viewers to hear, watch and participate in person as well as from remote locations.
- Update the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system throughout the building to provide a higher quality of air and increase energy efficiency.
- Enhance safety in the Chambers and the building's security controls by restricting access to parts of the building when City offices are closed.
- Create a multi-purpose, flexible public meeting space that can be used for a broad range of public meetings and events.

Discussions among City Council and staff about the need to renovate the Chambers began in 2017. For several years, the City has been earmarking capital funds for this project. \$900,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds have also been set aside to help fund the project. In 2021, the City Council selected CRW Architecture & Design Group to plan this project. Then, in 2022, Ebert Construction was selected as contractor for the project. In addition, the City Council also approved a contract with for the audio video improvements at its January 17 meeting. The total project costs are expected to be \$2.1 million.

The City Council will hold its final meeting in the current space on March 21. Beginning with its April 4 meeting, City Council meetings will be held in the Gainey Room at the Owatonna Public Library at 105 North Elm Avenue. The following meetings will also be relocated during the renovation:

- Planning Commission – Gainey Room at the Owatonna Public Library
- Housing & Redevelopment Authority – Second floor Conference Room at City Hall
- Parks, Recreation & Facilities Board – location will rotate, check Owatonna.gov

- Economic Development Authority - Second floor Conference Room at City Hall

The April 4 Groundbreaking Event will feature design illustrations of the planned renovations and a historical display being integrated into the project as well as remarks by City officials.

Equipment for Owatonna's Public Access, Education & Government channel will be relocated on March 22. This will cause an interruption in broadcasting for cable subscribers on channel 181 for Charter/Spectrum and channel 900 for Jaguar/MetroNet until March 23.

Access to City Hall during the work being planned is not expected to be restricted at any time. Construction is expected to be completed in early 2023.

The West Hills Commission has been an integral part of planning the renovations and working with the State Historical Preservation Office. Their support for the project includes the creation of a historical display that will demonstrate the ways the space has been used over time. Original architectural elements will be incorporated into the design of the renovated space to preserving aspects of the room's past.

"The City Council is committed to being good stewards of taxpayers' investment in the historic buildings that are municipally owned," said City Council President Greg Schultz. "We need to determine how to use these spaces so they serve the community effectively." The investment in the Council Chambers area will serve the community for the foreseeable future – at least 50 years.

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