



County of Santa Cruz

GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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BOB WATSON, DIRECTOR

August 19, 2002

AGENDA: August 27, 2002

Board of Supervisors
COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAMBERS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Dear Members of the Board:

During the recently concluded budget deliberations, your Board requested a report back on the status of the project to upgrade the Board Chambers. This letter provides your Board with that report.

Background

A total of \$50,000 was budgeted in the **FY 2001 - 02 Plant Budget** to upgrade the Board Chambers to provide audio and visual improvements. As your Board will recall, there were recurrent problems with the audio performance during Board of Supervisors meetings due to outdated speaker systems and other technical issues. In addition, upgrades were also needed to improve the audio/visual system and ensure its integration and reliability for broadcasting the Board meetings on community television. A project planning team was established to provide input and direction for the project. Group members included staff from the County Administrative Office, Board of Supervisors, Clerk of the Board, Planning, Information Services, and General Services. The group held several meetings and identified three phases for upgrading with this project as follows:

- **Audio** - Proposed upgrades in this area included improvements in the audio system and acoustics within the Board Chambers itself; improvement in the quality of audio provided to Community Television for their broadcasts of Board meetings; and improvements to the sound system providing audio through the "squawk box" system.
- **Audio-visual (AV)** - It was anticipated that proposed upgrades in this area would utilize new technology advances to improve the way presentations are made in the Board Chambers. These improvements would enable Board members, the audience and the television viewing audience to better view maps and other visuals that are presented to the Board (and other users of the Chambers such as the Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator, etc.). Potential improvements included placement of new viewing screens and/or television monitors in the Board Chambers and the use of high intensity electronic projectors which allow presentations to be made without having to turn off the room lights during the presentation.

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- Aesthetics - If funds permitted, the final phase of the project anticipated replacement of the wall coverings, carpet, lighting, etc. to improve the cleanliness, look and comfort of the Chambers for the public. Improvement in this area would **also** improve the acoustics of the room.

The project planning team agreed to proceed with cost estimates and implementation of the immediate improvements needed in the order listed above. It was anticipated that the funds available would not be sufficient for all phases of improvements, and that the planning process would result in an evaluation of short and longer term improvements for the Board Chambers that would be implemented over a period of time.

Phase 1 - Audio improvements

In July of 2001, staff from General Services' Technical Communications Division proceeded with several immediate technical upgrades to the audio system in the Board Chambers, which was twenty-two years old at the time. These completed upgrades included:

- Replacement of speakers.
- Replacement of the audience podium microphone.
- Rewiring of the Chambers for more optimal sound quality, including the use of new transformers to enable the amplifier to more efficiently distribute the audio signal.
- Installation of a new distribution amplifier. This amplifier isolates each part of the audio system so that the different audio feeds into the Chambers do not impact each other. (For example, when the Community Television technician adjusts the audio level of the television feed, the signal in the Board Chambers is also changed in the squawk box audio distribution.)
- Replacement of the microphones at the Board member dais.
- Rewiring of the audio feed to the 5th floor telephone closet for squawk box distribution.
- Optimization of the assisted listening system.

These upgrades have significantly improved the quality of the sound in the Board Chambers, on television, and throughout the distributed squawk box system. The system is completely documented and will be compatible with any further audio and audio/visual system upgrades that may be completed in the future. The cost of this phase of improvements to the audio system was approximately \$12,000.

Phase 2 - Audio-visual improvements

General Services' Technical Communications Division is currently planning to implement the next stage of audio improvements in the Board Chambers. This includes digitizing the microphone output for internet and intranet sound applications. This will allow for a much cleaner and crisper audio quality to those listening to Board proceedings over the intra- and internet. It is anticipated that this upgrade will also reduce the time delay experienced with the current system. Improvements in this system will facilitate the elimination of certain "squawk boxes" which also has the benefit of eliminating certain phone lines, and their associated costs, to off-site locations. Additionally, this equipment will permit archiving on digital backup to ensure the integrity and accessibility of the public record is maintained.

Plans are also underway to improve the assisted listening and language translation systems in the Board Chambers. This upgrade would increase the amplification to those visitors, and/or staff, using assisted listening and translating devices during meetings.

Both of these improvements will eliminate repair costs and inconvenience, and help to assure public access to the Board proceedings. The estimated costs for the improvements noted above is approximately \$15,000.

With the completion of the immediate audio improvements in the Board Chambers, attention was turned to improving the AV presentation capabilities in the Chambers. Several firms were contacted to determine their interest in conducting an audio/video review and study of the Board Chambers. Informal discussions were held, but it was determined that the most cost effective approach was to proceed with certain intermediate improvements that can be accomplished without extensive physical alterations to the Chambers or expensive infrastructure changes. For example, a basic "set" of AV equipment including an overhead projector, slide projector, and electronic projector, could be purchased and stored permanently in the Chambers. The Clerk of the Board could then coordinate with staff making presentations and have the equipment set up and ready prior to Board and/or commission meetings. This would facilitate presentations, assist in keeping the flow of agenda items running smoothly, and ensure that equipment was always available in the Chambers for presentations. It is anticipated that high quality equipment could be purchased for approximately \$10,000.

Phase 3 - Liahtinn and Acoustics

The improvements planned for this phase, such as the replacement of carpeting and wall coverings, and lighting upgrades, will improve the Chambers' audio and audio-visual quality and improve the cleanliness, comfort and utility of the Chambers for the public. If available, the \$13,000 remaining in the project budget would be sufficient to begin these lighting upgrades and acoustical enhancements.

Summary and Recommendation


The sound quality and reliability of the audio equipment in the Board Chambers has been greatly improved with the implementation of Phase 1, with further improvements planned for this fiscal year as described above. Purchase of audio-visual equipment dedicated for use in the Chambers will also facilitate the efficient use of Board agenda time. Basic improvements enhancing the acoustics and lighting in the Chambers will also provide practical upgrades to the overall functioning of the room.

It is therefore **RECOMMENDED** that your Board accept and file this report on the status of Board of Supervisors Chambers improvements.

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Sincerely,



BOB WATSON
Director

RECOMMENDED:



SUSAN A. MAURIELLO
County Administrative Officer

cc. County Administrative Office
Information Services Department
Planning Department
Clerk of the Board
Board of Supervisors Office