

FY 2021-22 Budget Board of Supervisor Inquiry Form

Deadline: September 30, 2021

Please email: CAO-Budget@sonoma-county.org

Board Member	
Gorin	
Rabbitt	
Coursey	
Gore	
Hopkins	X

Department: General Services

Date: _____

Inquiry Number: 33

Request/Question:

Vets buildings: Would like a list of deferred maintenance for each of the Vets buildings. How do we develop a long term strategy for the Vets buildings?

Response:

Deferred Maintenance List:

Prioritized projects to support Veterans Memorial Buildings were addressed in the September 14, 2021 Board Item "[Proposed Capital Budget Priorities for Veterans Buildings](#)", which passed on Consent. A comprehensive list of projects are also provided in the attached BIR-33 FY 21 22 Veteran Building Capital Priorities.

Long Term Strategy:

Investment in both the operations and capital improvements of the Veterans buildings will improve marketability and the resiliency of these critical facilities. Capital investments that improve the marketability are further described in BIR 115 Vets Buildings. However, with existing staffing resources and limited marketing budgets, it is reasonable to assume that revenues received will not cover the operational expenses required to maintain the buildings, and continued funding subsidies will be required.

Options for future consideration include divesting ownership of some buildings through either surplus or asset transfer as long as such actions are consistent with the Military Code requirements.

Alternatively, additional staffing resources could be provided to increase the marketability and improve operations and event management of the Sonoma, Cotati, Petaluma and Guerneville Veterans Memorial Buildings. Finally, prior studies, such as the Real Estate Master Plan, identified opportunities for neighborhood based service delivery at Veterans buildings. This concept could be further explored as a Local Assistance Center style pilot program focused on health and human services program delivery at the Cloverdale and Sonoma Veterans building. Although not addressing the operating cost challenges, expanded neighborhood service programming could increase use of the facilities in ways that were beneficial to Veterans and other community members. Increased

utilization may also help the facilities qualify for federal grants that have eligibility criteria, which penalize the Veterans buildings due to their relative light occupancy levels.

Background

The County owns seven Veterans Memorial Buildings, located in Cloverdale, Guerneville, Sonoma, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Cotati, and Petaluma. These are dedicated Veterans Memorials and provide meeting space for Veterans organizations as well as low-cost space for public use. Prior to July 2011, the Veterans Memorial buildings were programmed and managed by the Recreation and Cultural Services Division of Regional Parks with maintenance and capital needs addressed by the General Services Department. The buildings were supported within Regional Parks by 10.5 FTE in the Recreation and Cultural Services Division who performed marketing, event management, booking and reservations, office assistance, and facilities management.

In 2011-12, Regional Parks transferred the management responsibility of the Veterans Buildings to General Services. During this transfer of services the County contracted with three 3rd party Event Management Companies (UCCR, Sebastopol Center for the Arts, and River to Coast Children's Services) to manage all but two of the seven buildings. The two remaining buildings, Cloverdale and Sonoma, would be programmed and managed by General Services. With this transfer, the 10.5 FTE positions in Regional Parks who supported Veterans Buildings were eliminated and the remaining 1.5 FTE was transferred from Parks to General Services for continued event management.

In 2017, both UCCR (Santa Rosa, Petaluma, and Cotati buildings) and River to Coast Children's services (Guerneville) opted to terminate their agreements for providing rental event services, operations, and maintenance of these buildings. In an effort to keep the prior commitments of these 3rd party operators for community events without a break in service, General Services assumed responsibility for operations and rental services for three of the four buildings; and subsequently made arrangements with the Sonoma County Fairgrounds to provide event services oversight at the Santa Rosa Veteran's building. In 2017, we anticipated seeking additional 3rd party event management operators to manage the facilities, however a RFI was issued with no response. Since early 2017, General Services has struggled to manage the facilities, book events, and promote Sonoma, Petaluma, Guerneville, and Cotati with the original 1.5 FTE and a 0.5 Senior Office Assistant was added last fiscal year for administrative support.

Capital Improvements and Veterans Buildings

The purpose of the Five Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is to identify and plan the continued investment in County property assets. The annual Capital Budget authorizes expenditures in prioritized projects identified in the CIP. The CIP describes investment in Veterans Buildings as a program separate from other identified capital investment programs. Funding needs are identified in consultation with members of the Veterans Advisory Committee and are further evaluated and prioritized following Sonoma County's Administrative Policy 5-2.

Per the Board's adopted Administrative Policy 5-2, all projects must first serve to implement, or be consistent with, master plans for major County complexes and facilities, and with the County's overall long-range strategic goals. Policy 5-2 prioritizes project investments in safety improvements. Since the annual Capital budget funding allocation of \$3.9 million for the entire portfolio has remained flat for over ten years, investments in the aesthetic appearance of facilities, non-critical building systems, and

other features associated with modern event facilities are by necessity prioritized lower than projects addressing safety concerns.

Capital Improvement Prioritization Criteria

Prioritization of Veterans Building capital investments follow the same process as other County-owned facilities, emphasizing projects that address one or more of the following factors:

1. Required to meet compelling health, safety, legal or code compliance, a mandate of the Board of Supervisors, or a court order. (Projects with legal and urgent health/safety considerations are ranked highest of all).
2. Previously approved phases of a project, which are integral to completing its initial scope.
3. Required to keep an existing building, facility or complex operational. Provides measurable economic benefit or avoids economic loss to the County. Serves to maintain or improve infrastructure of the County as a general benefit to County operations and services (in some instances, the need to protect asset value is deemed urgent).
4. Alleviates constraints and impediments to effective public access and service such as improvements regarding space limitations or inefficient layout of space in County buildings or facilities, provisions for expanded or changed programs or services, or improvements to heating, ventilation or other work environment conditions.
5. Improves the environmental quality or aesthetics of County facilities and complexes

Additional factors used specifically for Veterans Buildings include:

1. Veteran Service Organization (VSO) priorities: Throughout the year, priorities for capital improvements for the Veteran's Buildings are received from VSO's. Many of their requests coincide with staff recommendations for maintenance as these issues directly impact health, safety and usability of facilities.
2. Marketability: Operational costs of Veteran's Buildings are partially offset by revenue generated by the use of the facility as rental venues for private events. Such events include weddings, birthdays, trade shows and other community events from private individuals. Investment of funds towards making the property more attractive as a private event venue would assist in revenue generation further offsetting operational costs. General enhancements that would aid in marketability are described in Attachment 2. Additional enhancements specific to each building are described below in Veteran Building Assets.

It is important to note that Veterans Building projects are funded via three different discretionary county funding sources: annual capital general fund budget, Transit Occupancy Tax allocations, and the Deferred Maintenance Fund.

Building Enhancements

The following list represents building enhancements that could make the buildings more competitive with other public event venues:

General Enhancements Applicable to All Vets Buildings

- Electronic messaging billboards
- Public WiFi
- Exterior security improvements-cameras add lighting
- Hire marketing staff or consultant to develop strategies
- Website revamp – online booking, include Spanish translation
- External marketing budget
 - Booth at Wedding Fairs
 - Marketing for small trade shows for local businesses
 - Create Bilingual flyers for distribution in communities such as churches
 - Radio, TV and internet ads
 - On-line booking with Real-Time scheduling ability and viewing

Cotati:

- Eliminate keys and install card readers and/or punch code readers on all doors
- Gated parking lot entrance for vehicle control
- Interior paint
- HVAC systems - need AC/Heat and air flow upgrades
- Install RV hook-ups and waste/water station – same hook-up for food concession trailer -
- Drought/fire resistance landscaping

Petaluma:

- Exterior security improvements-cameras add lighting
- Install PA systems with exterior speakers for parking lot
- Eliminate keys and install card readers and/or punch code readers on all doors
- Update bathroom/shower facilities –install connections for easy hook-up for portables outside the building
- Install RV hook ups and waste/water station – same hook-up for food concession trailer
- Drought/fire resistance landscaping

Santa Rosa:

- Security improvements/cameras, especially behind the building
- Install PA systems with exterior speakers for parking lot during TET's
- Eliminate keys and install card readers and/or punch code readers
- Automatic gate/fencing at entrances
- HVAC systems - need AC/Heat and air flow upgrades
- Update bathroom/shower facilities –install connections for easy hook-up for portables outside the building
- Install RV hook ups and waste/water station – same hook-up for use food concession trailer
- Pave/repair parking lot
- Aesthetic renovation of key spaces (floors, walls, ceilings and doors) including Lighting:
 - Auditoriums (Paint)
 - Add dimmer lighting feature for shelter use
 - Exterior plaster and paint

Sonoma:

- Install PA systems with exterior speakers for parking lot during TET's
- Automatic gate/fencing at entrances

- Update bathroom/shower facilities –install connections for easy hook-up for portables outside the building
- Install RV hook ups and waste/water station – same hook-up for food concession trailer
- Dimmer lighting