

Village of Colfax
Public Properties Committee Meeting
Monday, November 13th, 2023
6:30 p.m.
Village Hall, 613 Main Street, Colfax, WI

Agenda

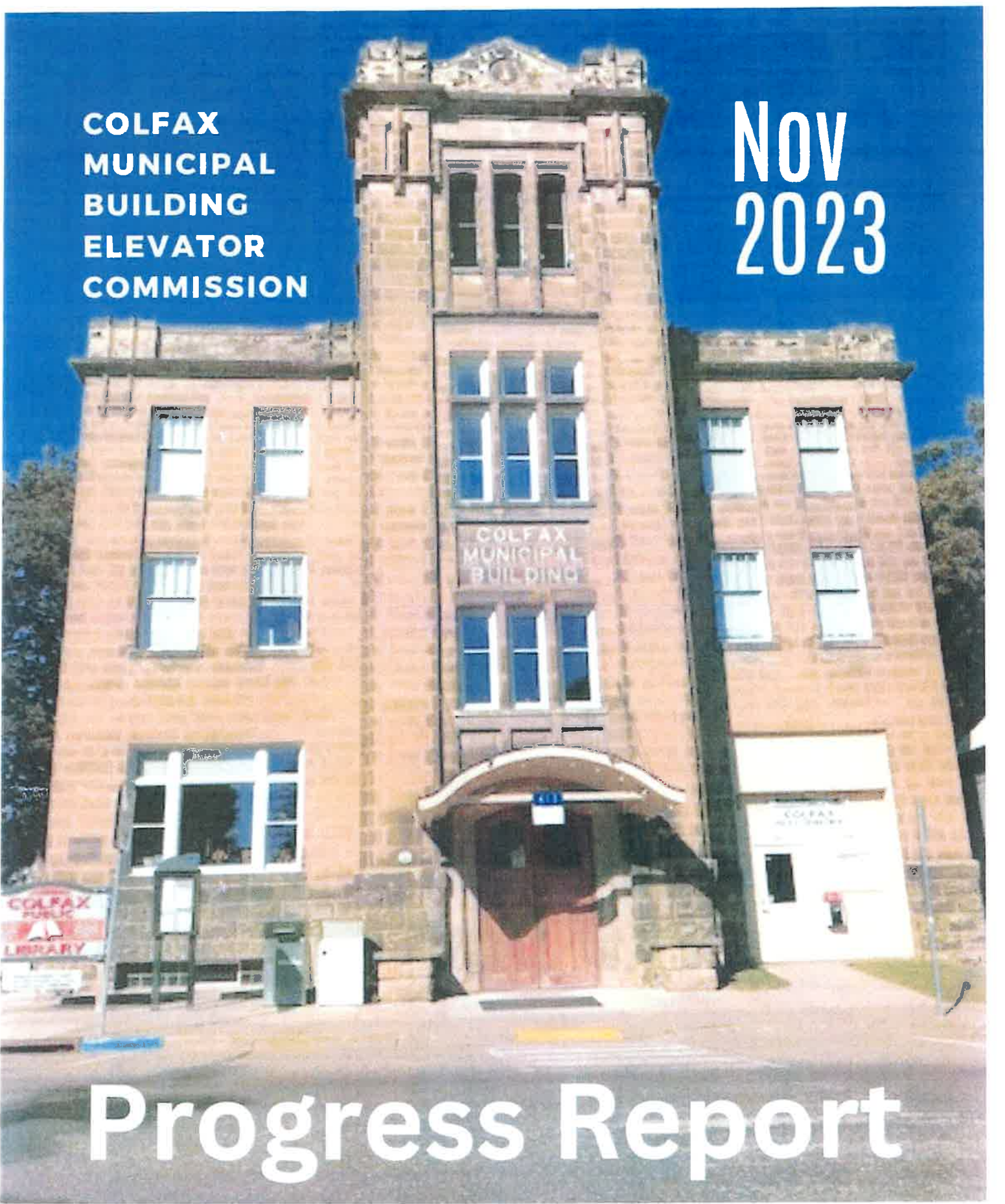
1. Call to Order
2. Village Hall Basement/Elevator Project Updates
3. Adjourn

Any person who has a qualifying disability as defined by the American With Disabilities Act that requires the meeting or materials at the meeting to be in an accessible location or format must contact: Lynn Niggemann Administrator-Clerk-Treasurer's Office, 613 Main Street, Colfax, (715) 962-3311 by 2:00 p.m. the day prior to the meeting so that and necessary arrangements can be made to accommodate each request.

******It is possible that members of and possibly a quorum of members of the governmental bodies of the municipality may be in attendance at the above-stated meeting to gather information- no action will be taken by any governmental body at the above-stated meeting other than the governmental body specifically referred to above in this notice.******

**COLFAX
MUNICIPAL
BUILDING
ELEVATOR
COMMISSION**

**Nov
2023**



Progress Report

What we've learned

On August 23rd the Village Properties Committee met and asked for specifics on why the Colfax Municipal Building basement is closed to the public, and what work is needed to open it.

First relevant document examined: The 1999 Property Condition Evaluation and Feasibility Study" produced by Short Elliot Hendrickson (SEH), Apex Engineering and L.L. Dahl Electric.

At that time, no restoration work had been done on the building and problems on all 3 main floors were extensive. The problems specific to the basement were:

- Moisture
- Floor warpage
- Accessibility (elevator and elevator tower required)
- Secondary stairs not enclosed as approved for smoke enclosure. Back stairs too narrow, steep, and run too short.
- No smoke detection system
- "Area of rescue" needed at exits (room for wheelchair to park and swing the door out)
- Fire blocking in horizontal and vertical directions needed
- Old boiler system
- Basement exhaust fans not vented
- Plumbing in kitchen and bathrooms outdated
- No drinking source
- Wiring material needs changing. Splicing not permitted.
- Needs to be grounded, bushings installed, branch circuits updated
- UL listings must be displayed
- Neutral and ground wires must have different lugs

The 1999 report concluded that it would cost more to fix the building than to construct new elsewhere. They recommended abandoning the building.

History and Context

Additional resources found that provided more detail

Troy Knutson provided a box of documents from this same time period, and I put them into an historical chronology:

- In 1998 there was a suspected dishwasher leak in the basement. A state building inspector closed the basement to the public that same year, citing asbestos around the old furnace, no eye wash, and the placement of pipes carrying steam.
- That very same month, the Village Board President, Gail Svee, asked Joan Scharlau to form a restoration group for the building. 22 people came to the group's first meeting.
- In 2000 architect Tim Peterson was hired to give his thoughts on the SEH report. He noted that while the SEH report was well written, it did not address the historical relevance of the building or what would happen to Colfax's downtown, should such a prominent local structure be abandoned.
- By 2001 the restoration group had raised \$26,000 for saving the building. Village Board President Gary Stene signed CMBRG's application for the building's historic status, and in 2004 the Colfax Municipal Building was officially recognized on state and national historic registers.
- Restoration of the first floor hallway commenced in 2005, and by September 2011 the Village invested \$284,000 in asbestos abatement, demolition, concrete, carpentry, roofing work, windows, painting, plumbing, HVAC, and electrical work. This was facilitated by a \$179,300 Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant and reimbursement of over \$100,000 from CMBRG.
- In 2013 the Village paid \$16,000 for mold clean up in the basement.
- In 2016-7 \$55,521 was paid to A Breeze to address exterior water problems affecting the basement.

Where we're at today

Community partnerships, steady fundraising, and including historical assets in our plan for the future



MONEY RAISED

We've raised over \$7000 since I spoke to you in August, bringing our money saved or pledged to \$137,388. Most of that is donations from alumni, but the rest is from Bake Sale earnings, postcard sales, and small donations from building users.



STRATEGIC PLAN

We estimate this is a \$1,000,000 project, but a Community Development Block Grant would pay 2/3 of that. When Elevator Fund savings are taken into account, Village responsibility is \$195,945.



KEY POINTS

- Most of the problems pointed out in the 1999 SEH report have been addressed. Only the basement and elevator work remain.
- A LOT of community support is behind this project, as reflected in the steady stream of (largely unsolicited) dollars we have been able to raise now that people know our goal.
- Main Street businesses recognize the value of promoting an historical downtown. This is a successful marketing strategy many communities have embraced.
- A lot of behind-the-scenes work has been done to save this building, and past Village Boards have always been part of the progress.

Next Steps

Is this what our community needs?

01

Involve the public

I am applying for a \$20,000 American Library Association (ALA) grant as part of **Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities**. This requires community input-gathering sessions to assure that our Elevator Project aligns with local needs.

I also intend to update our GoFundMe page to emphasize that our actual community fund-raising goal is smaller than the cost of the total project.

02

Continue the dialogue

I intend to give the Village Board regular reports about our activity and what we learn, both through the Properties Committee and through reports to the Village Board as a whole. I will also strive to continue our messaging on social media and the local newspaper.

03

Work together for the good of the Village

This is a unifying project. Local history, community service, and governmental function unite here.

Over \$137,000 saved, thanks to community support!

For five years this commission has met monthly. We've held thrift sales, bake sales, hosted events, and spear-headed fundraising drives to offset the Village's cost for this project. Our message has been simple:

We need space. Space for meetings, library programs, community events, and voting.

Since people love this historical building and their memories of it, the library wants to make it work!

Central location in the downtown, proximity to the school, and history make this building an asset.

For the Library's future growth in this space, we need access to more of the building. We can't let stairs be a barrier to inclusion.

Momentum for this project is growing. For more than a century, Colfax residents have worked to have a vigorous and healthy civic building. This Village Board is part of that good work.