



# CITY OF APPLETON

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** October 15, 2024  
**To:** Finance Committee  
**From:** Dean Gazza, Director of Parks & Recreation  
Kara Homan, AICP, Director of Community Development  
Olivia Galyon, Community Development Specialist  
**Subject:** ARPA Funds Obligation to Parks & Recreation Department for FCEC Repositioning & Tourism Recovery Project

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City staff are bringing forward a request to obligate the remaining amount of the Local Economic Recovery ARPA Allocation to a Parks & Recreation Department project, as follows:

**Project Title:** Fox Cities Exhibition Center (FCEC) Repositioning & Tourism Recovery Project

**Total ARPA Obligation/Award Amount:** \$985,000

**Lead Department:** Parks & Recreation Department

**ARPA Eligibility Category (EC):** EC 2.35 Aid to Tourism, Travel or Hospitality

**Project Description:**

The Fox Cities Exhibition Center opened in 2018. The building is owned by the City of Appleton, but managed by the entity that owns/operates the adjacent Appleton Hilton Paper Valley. The facility was challenged by the COVID 19 pandemic, which occurred in its first few years of operations which was planned to be its ramp up period. Since opening, and in particular since the pandemic, the facility has been hindered as the facility lacked some features that prevented it from reaching its full market & tourism potential – namely carpeting and acoustical improvements. To remedy these deficiencies, funding is proposed to design/engineer and install acoustical improvements; and evaluate and install carpeting. Other miscellaneous maintenance and improvements may also be considered dependent on budget and final scope of work.

Second, the Management Agreement for the Exhibition Center expires on 12/31/2025. We are seeking the assistance of a consultant(s) to assist in developing a strategy and advise on/guide the negotiation and development of a new management agreement. This consultant will assist the City to ensure the agreement is effective to reach the goals of the Exhibition Center. It will address marketing, maintenance, capital expenditures, staffing, utilization and other areas. Consultant(s) whom specializes in Exhibition Center agreements is/are required to ensure the greatest potential is reached for this facility and that the investment made by all municipalities is met.

Together, the implementation of these project components (e.g. Design/Engineering, Capital Improvements, and Management Consulting) will increase the number of organizations that will utilize the facility for future events, increasing tourism and generating more operating revenue. These funds will create a sustainable business model for the facility and improve tourism recovery post-COVID.

**Recommendation:**

City staff recommends approving the FCEC Repositioning & Tourism Recovery Project, as outlined in this memo.

As we implement this project, any components of the project (such as awarding consulting contracts or award of bids) will come back through the common council approval process in accordance with council rules and city policy.

This project has been reviewed and vetted by the city's ARPA consultant, Booth Management Consulting (BMC), and deemed to be ARPA eligible. They will advise the city throughout the project to ensure we comply with all federal / US Treasury requirements (in addition to city policy).