

Agenda Item Report



Winnebago County
The Wave of the Future

DATE: August 8th, 2022

FROM: Martin Rudd and JoAnn Rife

RE: Transfer of Funds for UWO Fox Cities – Barlow Planetarium Renovation (Astronomical Observation Facility)

General Description:

For this project, a feasibility study is needed to fulfill the proper steps in Winnebago and Outagamie county's process to ensure realistic funding is planned for the renovation of existing Barlow Planetarium on the UWO Fox Cities campus. Some of the necessary project criteria to re-design the Barlow Planetarium has already been identified, as a pre-study was performed. These elements would include the following: remove elements that will no longer be needed to enhance visitor experience, increase visitor comfort, increase capacity, plan a lobby that enhances guest flow, and ensure HVAC is capable of meeting the needs of the new equipment from the aspects of heating, cooling, humidity, and filtration. In addition to the needs above, this renovation is to incorporate the following: convert the current Curler Gallery to a light lock and a new entrance and exit, this would include automated doors. Interior finishes, including the interior of the existing dome, will need to be refreshed, as well as some safety features such as railing replacement, step lighting, and a console for security. Some modifications will be needed to accept the new updated equipment. Even though the needs have been identified, a true feasibility study will need to be performed to ensure realistic funding is planned for this project.

FF&E by UW System will be coordinated with the design

Action Requested:

The requested action is for a motion and vote to approve the transfer of the budgeted funds of \$12,000 for the UWO-Fox Cities Barlow Planetarium renovation feasibility study. With this property being split funded, ½ the total is Winnebago Counties responsibility.

Procedural Steps:

Committee of Jurisdiction: Facilities & Property
Action taken: APPROVED

Meeting date: August 24, 2022
Vote: 5-0

Committee of Jurisdiction: Personnel & Finance
Action taken: APPROVED

Meeting date: September 1, 2022
Vote: 4-0

Committee of Jurisdiction: County Board
Action taken:

Meeting date: September 20, 2022
Vote:

Background:

The Barlow is one of the busiest stand-alone university planetariums in the United States. It is at or near the top of similar facilities in the Midwest (including Michigan State, Delta College, Parkland College and Ball State).

- The current planetarium serves **30,000 visitors per year** with its 1990's technology – Evans & Sutherland Digistar II, Sun Sparc Ultra workstations and Windows 95 computers.
- In the UW System the Barlow is the most attended and highest admission revenue generating planetarium <https://www.msn.com/en-us/feed>
- The Barlow serves more people (from 23 of Wisconsin's 72 counties) and generates three times the revenue the rest of the UW planetariums combined.

The current projection system is running on technology and parts that are no longer available to support the existing system. When issues arise, parts need to be obtained by purchasing old identical systems on Ebay etc. Parts are very scarce and becoming very difficult to obtain, therefore a renovation of this planetarium is critical to its future.

The next generation of the Barlow Planetarium is conservatively estimated to serve nearly 60,000 visitors per year and enhance the state of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) education in the Fox Cities and Northeast Wisconsin.

Policy Discussion:

Attachments:

Draft resolution will be attached.....