

**ROOM 201 USERS**  
**DISCUSSION SESSION ON ROOM 201 IMPROVEMENTS**  
**July 24, 2006**

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Attendees

The meeting was attended by representatives of the primary users of Room 201:

Tim Saterfield - Office of the County Board  
Lisa Veldran - Common Council Office  
Judge Dan Koval - Madison Municipal Court  
Brad Murphy, Tim Parks, and Bill Roberts - City Planning (Plan Commission)  
Doug May and Boyce Johnson - Madison City Channel  
Dean Brassler - City Comptroller's Office  
Dick Grasmick - City Information Services Department

Written comments were received from Todd Violante, County Planning and Development Department, which staffs the county Zoning and Land Regulation Committee.

General Overview

There was a general consensus among the group that Room 201, essentially unchanged in the fifty years it has been in use, could use a technological upgrade, improved handicapped accessibility, and a general improvement in appearance. The room accommodates hundreds if not thousands of members of the public over the course of a year – persons in municipal court, those observing or testifying at Common Council and County Board meetings, as well as those appearing before the city Plan Commission and county Zoning and Land Regulation Committee. In addition, many meetings are televised from the room and viewed throughout the county on cable television. There is a concern that the room does not give an overall professional and welcoming appearance to the public. Most users are concerned that general maintenance and cleanliness of the room is not what it has been. For example, it does not appear that the room is cleaned regularly after meetings anymore – users find discarded material and garbage in the room from a previous day's meeting.

**TECHNOLOGY**

AC wiring & outlets for supervisor/alder desks

The City of Madison included money in its 2005 budget to wire the twenty desks used by city alders in Room 201 for AC, and recently approved moving forward with this project. These desks are in the first two rows of the chambers. The County Board is interested in having the remaining two rows wired, which could also be used by city staff who sit there during common council meetings. While the Common Council and County Board would be the primary users of this improvement, other users such as the city Plan Commission, county Zoning and Land Regulation Committee and Municipal Court would also be able to use the electric outlets. Madison City Channel suggested that the AC be run on a separate circuit so as to prevent the potential for power outages to other systems in use during a meeting.

Sound System

Users continue to experience occasional problems with the sound system. The primary concern is that microphones periodically do not work – this is a recurring problem with the mic at the public speaking area to the left of the chair seated at the dais, which can be particularly disruptive when there are large numbers of registrants at a meeting. There was agreement that some sort of

regular maintenance would be useful, and a clearer system for whom to notify in the event there are problems. Some users would like to have a longer mic stem at the public speaking microphones, particularly since the right side podium was lowered. Although hand held microphones have been provided for use by presenters at the front of the room, there was a feeling that adding a wireless mic would be a worthwhile investment. Not only could they be used by presenters to free them up when using maps or other displays, but some handicapped individuals testifying to a meeting might find them convenient. Users wanted to know if assistive listening devices were available, and while it appears there are devices, it seems that some training is needed to ensure that all users know how to operate them. Municipal Court reported that at least one of the tape decks is not working, although no other users present had noticed a problem. The County Clerk did find that a tape that he thought had been made in fact was not recorded, so that seems to verify the concern.

#### Technology to accommodate visual presentations

There was a consensus that it would be desirable to acquire and locate equipment that would allow for more convenient visual presentations to be made in Room 201. Currently, there is no electrical outlet at the front of the room, requiring an extension cord to be run from either the back of the room or the dais to a central location. There is no cart or desk dedicated to video or computer usage, and there is no lap top or other device within the room for users. Anyone making a presentation in Room 201 must either bring their own equipment or arrange for city or county staff to bring equipment. It might be possible to locate a projector in the ceiling for this purpose, compatible with the robotic cameras City Channel has located in the room. It was also suggested that monitors could be located in the public seating areas to make it easier for the general public to see presentations that are projected to the screen behind the dais – currently it is difficult for many of those seated in the galleries to see. The County Planning Department suggested that access to the county's network would allow for maps, orthophotos and other information to be accessed during a meeting and projected before the meeting.

### **GENERAL ROOM APPEARANCE AND FUNCTIONALITY**

#### Seating and Room Design

There is a general concern about the design and functionality of the public seating areas, which are at the front of the room and face the back of the room at an angle. It is difficult for many of the seats to have a view of the chair or any visual presentation made at the dais, or someone speaking from the opposite side at the public speaking podium. Many of these chairs are in very poor condition, both visually and structurally. The fabric and wood is worn and dirty. Some users mentioned a concern with the flow of traffic in the room, and that the entry foyer can provide a place for those entering and exiting the chambers to gather and disturb meetings that are continuing. There was some concern expressed about the capacity of the room and whether more seating could be installed. We did not discuss fire code restrictions and what effect they might have on increasing capacity.

Handicapped accessible seating is not present. Currently, wheel-chair bound individuals must move to the back of the room or remain in the entry-way, but cannot be accommodated in the seating area. One suggestion was to remove the front wall from the gallery and perhaps the first row of seats, and wheel-chairs could be accommodated although they might stick out into the walkway. The recently remodeled public podium at the right side of the dais addressed a long standing concern about the lack of an accessible microphone.

### Dais

There are several concerns with the dais. The dais is not in very good condition – the top veneer is cracked, and the front of the dais is looking worn and dated. Some users pointed out that the front of the dais is seen on the television broadcasts and is also seen by participants in municipal court and does not make a good impression. The dais is not handicapped accessible. There have been discussions over the years about making it accessible, but at its current height ramping would be impossible within the room's space limitations. There seemed to be a consensus that removing the current dais and installing a new one that is accessible would be desirable. Municipal Court would like to maintain a height fitting a courtroom setting, ie. not at floor level. At minimum, users would like to see the dais refinished. There was a suggestion that the city and county seals should be displayed on the dais.

### Shades

The vertical shades covering the windows at the back of the room, along M.L. King Boulevard, are in poor condition. Often pieces of the shades are laying on the floor. Functional window coverings are critical for City Channel coverage of meetings, particularly in the spring and summer when sunset occurs later in the evening. The general appearance of the shades is not good, and members of the public seated in the public seating area look directly at the shades. The shades are readily visible during television broadcasts as well.

### Ceiling

Some users have indicated a desire to replace the current acoustical textured white drop ceilings, primarily for aesthetic reasons. There was no consensus that this was a priority, since it appears to be in fairly good shape, however it might help the overall appearance of the room.

### Lighting

Two lights over the gallery to the chair's left do not have currently have shades. These bare bulbs do not look good to the public or meeting participants. Most agreed that in general the back areas of the gallery are very dark for the public and could use additional lighting. There was discussion about whether current lighting is energy efficient. City Channel pointed out that lighting is very important for the purposes of broadcasting the various meetings.

### General Accessibility Issues

There is a power door at the side of the room, but there is a concern that there is no signage at the front door directing the handicapped to the side door. Some passage ways in the room are tight for wheel chairs, although we think it meets ADA requirements in general. Recent modifications have provided two desks in the room that accommodate wheelchairs.

### Media Room

Most users were not familiar with the current usage of the media room during the day. A new media room was constructed in the new courthouse, and presumably most of the media activity is now conducted there. There is usage by the media during common council, county board and plan commission meetings. Municipal Court in particular would like to have more private areas for lawyers, litigants and prosecutors to confer prior to court proceedings. Now, those discussions occur at the back of the room. If there is potential for relocating the media room, or accommodating other uses especially during the day for Municipal Court proceedings, that would be desirable. City Channel pointed out that they sought permission to relocate their new board for the robotic cameras in that room, but it was determined to continue to use it for media. City Channel would be willing to have their broadcast center in that room, freeing up space in the chambers for other uses.

## GENERAL SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

Short term/lower cost/primarily maintenance:

- Move forward with wiring all desks for AC
- Repair sound system and provide for regular maintenance, perhaps with a local vendor; clarify responsibilities for reporting problems with the sound system; provide training for assistive listening devices; procure wireless mic; procure longer extensions for public testimony mics
- Repair tape deck
- Replace window coverings
- Repair/replace light fixtures in gallery (bare bulbs)
- signage for accessible door
- clarify “ownership” responsibilities for Room 201 – clean up after meetings; broken furniture; equipment (chalk boards, coat racks, etc.); folding chairs

Longer term/some investment required:

- Replace seats and possibly redesign and remodel public seating areas; create additional accessible seating
- Acquire and install equipment for visual presentations; install monitors in galleries; provide network access
- Renovate/replace dais
- replace ceiling

Other items

- Explore other uses for media room
- Review long term seating plan on floor – how many seats will be needed?

(notes by Tim Saterfield, Office of the County Board – 7/26/06)