

KEYSWEEKLY

KEY COLONY BEACH MOVES CLOSER TO OFFICE REPAIRS & PICKLEBALL EXPANSION

By **Alex Rickert** - May 23, 2024



KCB Building Official Ed Borysiewicz demonstrates the installation of flood panels in Marble Hall during the city commission's May 16 session. ALEX RICKERT/Keys Weekly

Work set for administrative offices

A stabilizing sub-floor foam injection and replacement of a sagging ceiling beam should soon pave the way for reopening of KCB's City Hall administrative offices left vacant since Hurricane Irma, Vice Mayor Freddie Foster reported Thursday.

Previously deemed unfit for occupancy due to a void beneath a cracked floor slab in an area colloquially referred to as "the fault line," Foster said a structural foam injection should "fill, lift and stabilize" the floor. Such a procedure should allow city staff to reoccupy the area of the building that has served as the centerpiece of years-long debate in KCB in determining the fate of City Hall.

"We've analyzed it to the point where it's analysis paralysis," Foster said. "It's time to get work done."

Commissioner Tom DiFransico raised questions of the need for a KCB Emergency Operations Center (EOC), previously considered in discussions for constructions of a new City Hall building. Building Official Ed Borysiewicz and Foster said that while Key Colony Beach maintains reserved seats in the soon-to-open Monroe County EOC at the Marathon International Airport, a separate structure within the city may still be on the table by using an available \$2.2 million from a state hardening grant to create a standalone building or expand and fortify areas of the existing City Hall building.



Trending

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Harding requested a quote for repair of the administrative area floor using pin piles, while commissioner Doug Colonell spoke in favor of formal budgeting for repairs, hardening and additions to City Hall moving forward, previously unaddressed as plans for the building were in flux.



"At some point, are we going to have a budget for repair and mitigation costs, beams, pin piling, the floor and leveling?" he asked. "And then, is there money available for us to do an expansion or new builds? How would we budget those, and what are those budgets?"

While pledging to solidify budgets for the various proposed projects moving forward, Harding reiterated that any repairs to the building must not exceed FEMA's 50% rule, a precaution made easier with careful separation and tracking of repair expenses versus costs incurred for new floodproofing and hardening projects in the building.

Pickleball to expand

Following extensive discussions with the city's Recreation Committee and newly-formed Key Colony Beach Pickleball club, the city is officially headed for a reshuffling of its pickleball, tennis and basketball courts, Borysiewicz said.

Existing basketball courts on 7th Street will be converted into two tennis courts, while the existing tennis courts on 8th Street will be fully converted to pickleball courts, Borysiewicz said. An area of the newly-converted 8th Street pickleball courts will be additionally striped for basketball, with the addition of a hoop.

Aggressive fundraising efforts by the city's pickleball club in support of one of the nation's fastest-growing sports have so far yielded more than \$200,000 in donations that will largely fund the conversion. Official plans are in the engineering stage, Borysiewicz said.

'Major' work needed on Sadowski bridge

In-water construction costs upwards of \$500,000 to repair the Sadowski Causeway bridge are a "top priority" for the city following two yearly inspections, Mayor Joey Raspe and commissioner Tom Harding reported.

"The causeway bridge is in bad shape, and it's expensive to fix it correctly," Raspe said. "If you look at some of the inspections, my opinion is that we're lucky (FDOT) haven't forced our hand at this point."



“We need to step up and try to get some quotes, show them that those are coming in and that we’ve got contracts lined up,” said Harding.

In other news:

- The city’s monthly town hall discussion meetings, reinstated in September 2023, will pause for the summer months and resume in November.
- A move of the city’s mailboxes back into the reoccupied City Hall post office, previously scheduled for Memorial Day weekend, is now set to take place over the weekend of June 21 due to delays in custom countertop fabrication for the renewed office. Raspe reported he had signed a new lease with the post office for continued operation in the City Hall building.
- Following a unanimous commission vote, the city will engage in discussions with the Florida Keys Electric Cooperative to explore a possible addition of solar panels to the roofs of city buildings, rented to the power company in exchange for a reduction in the city’s electric bill.

ALEX RICKERT

Alex Rickert made the perfectly natural career progression from dolphin trainer to newspaper editor in 2021 after freelancing for Keys Weekly while working full time at Dolphin Research Center. A resident of Marathon since 2015, he fell in love with the Florida Keys community by helping multiple organizations and friends rebuild in the wake of Hurricane Irma. An avid runner, actor, and spearfisherman, he spends as much of his time outside of work on or under the sea having civil disagreements with sharks.

