

**The Capitol Square Review and
Advisory Board
Operating Budget Request**

FY 2022/2023



**CAPITOL SQUARE
REVIEW & ADVISORY
BOARD**

BUDGET TESTIMONY

*Ohio Senate – Primary and Secondary Education Committee
April 20, 2021*

Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board

**Laura P. Battocletti
Executive Director**

Good afternoon, Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the committee. I am Laura Battocletti, Executive Director of the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board (CSRAB).

The CSRAB was created in 1988 to renovate, operate, maintain and preserve the historic character of the Capitol Square Complex (CSC), which comprises the Capitol building, Senate building, Atrium, grounds, and the underground parking garage. The operation of the complex is controlled by the 12 members of the Capitol Square Review and Advisory Board.

The Board consists of four members representing the Ohio House of Representatives, four members representing the Ohio Senate, three members appointed by the Governor, and the Governor's Chief of Staff.

In addition to maintaining and operating the Capitol Square Complex (CSC), the CSRAB is charged with educating visitors about the history of Ohio, including the state's political, economic, and social development, and the design and construction of the capitol building and its grounds. We place a strong emphasis on educational programming and have become part of the community fabric in Columbus, collaborating with other cultural institutions and state agencies to share Ohio's history with the thousands of children and families that visit the Statehouse each year. While last year we had to suspend our public tours due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were nevertheless able to continue educating school children and the public through virtual tours and special Facebook live programs. In 2019, we recorded over 52,000 people on scheduled

tours, with thousands more doing walk-in or self-guided tours. The number of people who were recorded entering the building through security screenings, including Statehouse cardholders, was over 435,000. We look forward to being able to return to the traditional in-person educational programs and services we are known and respected for once we are again able to host large gatherings.

Our diverse partnerships have provided the ability to continue free, family-friendly programming such as the annual holiday festival, Civil War encampment on the Statehouse lawn, performing arts presentations, and countless educational programs. Each year we commemorate the repose of President Abraham Lincoln in the Rotunda and we host an American Revolutionary War Living History Day with Battery A, a civil war reenactment group commissioned by the CSRAB. The firing of the Statehouse cannons is a highlight of this event, bringing in school groups and history enthusiasts to the complex. Again, while we had to suspend these activities in 2020, and have had to do so again for many activities in 2021, we look forward to resuming our full programming in the very near future.

One important partnership that we maintain is with the Capitol Square Foundation. Currently, the Foundation assists with the funding of our educational programs through public donations. The CSRAB continues to work with the Capitol Square Foundation to achieve our shared goal of having every school-aged child in Ohio visit the Statehouse before graduation. To this end, transportation grants are offered to school districts through the Foundation to offset the costs of field trips to the Statehouse.

Another shared goal of the CSRAB and the Capitol Square Foundation is to enrich the experience of schoolchildren, teachers and all Ohioans visiting Capitol Square by investing in the Ohio Statehouse Museum. The Ohio Statehouse Museum's mission is to inspire the next generation of public servants who will lead our great state. The museum includes hands-on, interactive activities in an open environment, and is an integral part of our educational programming. The museum also provides countless opportunities to collaborate with K-12 schools, which we value greatly. The most recent collaboration with the Capitol Square Foundation and the Ohio History Connection yielded an upgrade to the museum that enabled the

original 1802 and 1851 Ohio Constitutions to be on permanent public display at the Ohio Statehouse. Working together, this public-private partnership has produced an exhibit that is the first of its kind in the United States. We are currently working on making the Constitution exhibit more robust by developing programming that will bring the stories behind the Ohio Constitution to life.

Our existing partnerships allow us to make the wisest use of our resources and ensure that the Statehouse is a place of learning for everyone. The CSRAB will continue to spend appropriated funds in an intelligent, efficient and economical manner.

CSRAB employees are proud to work on Capitol Square and serve the governor, legislature and citizenry. Our 59 full-time staff provide a wide range of services that are summarized below:

- **Administrative** – Oversees agency operations including finance, human resources and security.
- **Maintenance** – Ensures the operation and functionality of the building, including HVAC, plumbing, electrical, furniture repairs and relocating items in the Statehouse when required.
- **Grounds** – Maintains the landscaping, removes snow and keeps the 6.5 acres of grounds litter-free. This department is also responsible for the repair, replacement and maintenance of the granite pavers, monuments, fountains and flags on the grounds.
- **Custodial** – Cleans the combined 300,000 square feet of the Statehouse, Senate Building and Atrium. The majority of this work is accomplished in the evenings in an effort to respect the business of the legislature.
- **Communications** – Works with the various departments to promote the Statehouse to the general public.
- **Education** – Provides the free educational programs offered and oversees the dedicated volunteers who lead the daily tours. This department is also responsible for exhibits and the acquisition and cataloguing of art and artifacts housed in the museum and throughout the Statehouse.

- **Special Events** – Schedules, coordinates, and breaks down the events that take place on Capitol Square. In FY18, over 1,000 events were held including weddings, press conferences, receptions and rallies.
- **Museum Shop** – Operates a shop that offers Ohio made and Ohio themed merchandise.
- **Parking Garage** – Operates and cleans the 1,200 spaces, 2 penthouses and numerous stairways in the parking garage that is open 24 hours, seven days a week.

The budget request before you represents flat funding for FY 22/23. We are cognizant of the fiscal challenges facing the state and are confident that with strong fiscal management, we can maintain the quality of services you have come to expect.

The CSRAB operates under the following three major funds:

- **GRF** – Funding from the state used to operate and maintain the CSC.
- **2080** – Dedicated Purpose Fund/Underground Parking Garage Operations – Revenue from parking used to operate and maintain the Statehouse Parking Garage.
- **4S70** – Internal Service Activity/Statehouse Gift Shop/Events – Revenue from sales in the Statehouse Museum Shop and fees for special event activities support the operation of the Museum Shop and the Special Events Department.

In 2017, we conducted a facility assessment of the Statehouse and a Structural Condition Survey Report of the Parking Garage, which together provided the Board a comprehensive assessment of the condition of the building. As a result, the Board was able to devise a long-term plan to address necessary repairs and general maintenance for the building and garage. More than \$45 million in projects were identified as needing to be addressed within the next 20 years, with \$31.1 million of those falling in the 0-5 year range. We were able to complete \$2.9 million of these projects under the FY18/19 and FY 20/21 budget along with capital funding.

The report on the structural condition of the parking garage became more critical in the last fiscal year. The condition of the waterproofing membrane continued to fail, resulting in the increase in

the deterioration of the concrete floors at a faster than anticipated rate. Although minor repairs were done on the columns, it became apparent that the concrete deterioration was developing into a safety risk, and we could no longer wait for the repairs to be done. The General Assembly appropriated \$20 million for this project in December, 2018 and we are currently in the final stage of the construction project.

The construction has been carried out in four phases, with 300 parking spaces being taken out of commission at a time. This has necessarily resulted in a decrease in garage revenue throughout the duration of the project, which we estimated to be approximately \$700,000/year. Unfortunately, the reduced demand for parking due to the pandemic has compounded construction-related revenue decreases, resulting in a drastic reduction in parking revenue beyond what we anticipated. We have always been cognizant of the need to keep a healthy balance in the parking garage fund for emergency and unanticipated repairs to the garage while utilizing some of these funds to support the entire CSC.

The extent of the deterioration of the parking garage was further revealed during the construction project, with significantly more structural work needed than originally anticipated. Once the parking garage is completed in the summer of 2021, it will be structurally sound and remain a vital part of the capitol square complex for decades to come.

In previous fiscal years, the parking garage revenue was used to pay for a portion of the CSRAB's payroll, including the payroll of the parking garage employees, the grounds employees and others.

During the last fiscal year, we committed to the General Assembly that all non-garage employees would be paid through our GRF, and we have been able to honor this commitment thanks to an increase in our GRF appropriation.

Since my appointment to this board almost 5 years ago, one of my top goals has been to retain the vast institutional knowledge and experiences related to the operation and history of the CSC held by our employees. Of the 59 full-time employees, 18 (30%) are eligible to retire within 5 years. The majority of these employees are in critical positions and have served the CSRAB for

20 plus years. We are working on transferring these important skill sets through thoughtful succession planning. I also believe it is critically important to invest in staff and skilled trades people. We have hired a professional painter, electrician and HVAC technician as other positions have opened up, saving us from contracting out these jobs that can and should be done internally. This has all been accomplished under our current FY20/21 budget, and the request before you will allow us to continue this investment.

There is no doubt that the Statehouse and CSRAB employees have faced many challenges over this past year. For the first time in the history of the Board, we have had to implement our pandemic management plan in order to provide for the health and safety of our employees amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We have managed to do so, all the while keeping the building open to the public. Those staff who can work from home are doing so, and those who, by the nature of their job cannot work from home are working staggered shifts. All of our sanitizing protocols meet or exceed the CDC guidelines and we are constantly looking at new products and techniques to sanitize the building.

We experienced protests and civil unrest on the grounds of the capitol square complex requiring significant response and at times, significant repairs. Shifting current events have necessitated corresponding shifts in our security. Our relationship with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, which is tasked with providing security to the CSC, is based on a mutual respect for our shared yet disparate roles. The bottom line is that all people who come to the Statehouse can do so knowing that all precautions are being taken to keep them safe. We are working on recommendations to enhance the security of the Statehouse, including additional surveillance cameras, access control, and lighting. These enhancements will necessitate an increase in funding above our request, and I will be reaching out to you once we have secured a final estimate.

In closing, we know that the key to keeping capital expenses down in the future is to be diligent in executing the proper preventative maintenance. The CSRAB will continue to spend appropriated funds in a prudent and efficient manner, while meeting its statutory obligation to maintain and preserve this beautiful and historic building.

Thank you for the opportunity to highlight Capitol Square and our programs.

On behalf of the Board, let me say how grateful we are for the state funding that you and your colleagues in the General Assembly provide to the CSRAB to maintain the CSC. These funds help ensure that the buildings and grounds are operational for the executive and legislative branches of state government and the people of Ohio – especially the tens of thousands of school children who visit the Statehouse each year.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.