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DEVELOPING

# Powerhouse is fully operational and paid off

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer  
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BELOIT — The Beloit College Powerhouse will be a game changer for the college and is already a tremendous asset during the COVID-19 pandemic due to its spacious size, according to Dan Schooff, the chief of staff and secretary of Beloit College who acted as powerhouse project manager.

“The building is fully operational and open, and is working well for us in these crazy COVID-19 times,” Schooff said. “It’s been the ideal building to operate during a pandemic with social distancing.”

Construction work on the building finished up on Sept. 1. Two weeks ago construction crews finished work on the parking lot in coordination with the city’s Riverwalk project, and landscaping will be done on the facility’s north end this spring.

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The Powerhouse has been paid off thanks to donations from alumni, community members and from government sources including historic tax credits from the state and federal government.

“We achieved that goal, and no tuition dollars students will pay a mortgage,” Schooff said.



Work started on the O'Neill Fieldhouse in July of 2019 and finished about a year later. The 17,000-square-foot facility features natural lighting and two large hangar doors on the north end to allow in fresh air during the spring, summer and fall. Although it was designed for athletics and recreation, students have used to for events, dance, movies and more.

“It’s been a very flexible space for us,” Schooff said.

Schooff said the building also features Hamilton’s Cafe in addition to its athletic offerings and meeting and class space.

The facility incorporates features from the Powerhouse’s history such as coal hoppers and funnels, a 100-foot tall smokestack to peer into, old intake pipes and retro gauges. Not only does the Powerhouse’s features give a nod to the past, but it also has the latest technology with geothermal energy powering its heating and cooling system by use of river water.

Unfortunately, Schooff said the innovative new facility is not open to the general public at this time due to the pandemic. However, as soon as it’s deemed safe by public health officials it will be available for community use. Spaces will also be available for rent by community groups or businesses.

“We had thousands of people at an open house in February, and we look forward to the community finding ways to use it in the future,” Schooff said. “It’s a game changer, and we are so proud of the partners that made it happen.”



Currently there are no sports competitions, but teams continue to practice in small groups and the pool is being used by the swim team and for lap swimming in a limited way.

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Hillary Gavan

Corporate Contractors, Inc. (CCI) commenced with the bulk of construction on the \$38 million project in February of 2018 when it started transforming the 105,000-square-foot historic portion of the decommissioned Blackhawk Generating Station at 850 Pleasant St. The new student center was to feature meeting rooms, nooks and “hang out” spaces, an indoor track, pool, cafe, field house, conference center, outdoor decks and health and wellness center. The vision was for educational spaces to converge with recreational and community spaces.

The Powerhouse’s overhead pedestrian bridge over Highway 51/Pleasant Street was to transport students from the main campus to the state-of-the art facility and was completed in June.

On Feb. 8, Beloit College unveiled its new \$38 million Powerhouse facility in an open house for the community, attracting thousands of visitors. Located at the site of the decommissioned Blackhawk Generating Station, the Powerhouse became the institution’s first site on the banks of the Rock River.

With its 120,000-square-feet of space and 20-to-40-foot-high ceilings the Powerhouse has a lot of volume in addition to an HVAC system bringing in all fresh air.

“It doesn’t re-circulate any air. What we’ve learned through COVID-19 is that spreading out is important as well as modern ventilation systems which don’t recirculate air.”



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