



# MEMO

DATE: 5/13/2025

MEMO: Emergency Repairs – Lake Superior Zoo

TO: Purchasing Agent / City Councilors

FROM: Erik Birkeland, Property & Facilities Manager

Emergency repairs amounting to \$11,320.01 were completed to repair damage caused by interior frozen water pipes at the Lake Superior Zoo.

A water line in the main floor bathroom froze and broke. Zoo staff contacted Paul Davis to clean up the water damage and dry out several areas without prior consultation or authorization from City staff. Facility Operations & Maintenance Supervisor, Bryan Thoreson, personally visited the site the next day to assess the extent of the damage. Paul Davis had several pieces of equipment on site already and was attempting to dry ceiling tiles and walls that were wet due to the water line leaking for several hours.

We believe that the Zoo had anticipated that the City would make an insurance claim – however that was not the case as we are self-insured, and the estimated damage was under the \$25,000 minimum according to discussions between Facilities and Risk Manager Jesse Budisalovich.

The emergency nature of this work is due in part to the fact that Facilities Maintenance does not own specialty industrial drying equipment, such as dehumidifiers, air movers, air scrubbers, and moisture detectors. These tools are used to remove excess moisture from the air and surfaces, preventing mold growth and ensuring structural integrity.

Addressing water damage *promptly* is the best way to combat issues with mold growth along with using professional remediation services.

Currently, the Zoo Management Agreement between the City of Duluth and the Arrowhead Zoological Society states that “The City will be responsible for the repair and maintenance of existing underground electrical, sewer, and water lines on the Premises” (22879; Article V, section G.) – this further led to confusion about who is responsible for coordinating and ultimately paying for these services. Per the City Attorney’s office, it was determined this expense was the City’s responsibility.

Further clarification and definition of expected routine maintenance and facility repairs will be needed when renewing the Management Agreement upon its expiration on May 31, 2026. Until that time, Facilities has been directed to pay this invoice from Paul Davis for emergency water remediation services in the amount of \$11,320.01 (INV #2522-E) using City general funds.