

LIBRARY BUILDING OPEN HOUSES SUMMARY

By Laurie Orton, Library Director

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On May 20th and 21st, the San Juan Island Library Board of Trustees and staff hosted a series of three community meetings at the Grange to consider the findings of an architectural review of the condition of the library building, as well as future options for possible expansion. Nearly 90 islanders attended the three meetings, and heard presentations by David Strauss and Hannah Allender, of SHKS Architects, and Mark Madsen, Library Board trustee.

The architects' review of the building determined that it has been “very well maintained” over the years, but there are still ongoing problems and continuing maintenance issues that should be addressed. These include episodic basement flooding, buckling in the parking lot, some wood-earth contact, structural cracks, roof problems, and lack of adequate insulation, among others. They noted that there are inherent challenges in retrofitting a library for use in a structure that was originally designed to house a restaurant. Mechanical systems are reaching their usable life span. Air circulation is inefficient, leaving pockets of hot or cold air in various sections, depending on the season.

Mark Madsen explained that the Board is considering the next-door county Public Works lot as a possible site for Library expansion or for a new building, and the Library and the county are in discussions about its future. The Public Works Department is expected to vacate the property in the next 12-18 months as they consolidate departments on their Beaverton Valley site. This would offer a unique opportunity for the Library to expand onto, or build on, a site that is not only adjacent, but may be relatively affordable, compared to property which might lie closer to the town core. Nevertheless, other properties could be considered.

The architects presented five general options for future building expansions. The first was a modest one-story addition extending into the existing parking lot. The second was an addition of a second story atop the existing building. Both were deemed non-viable, as neither would meet the required codes for parking, and would also necessitate the complete upgrading of the library structure and

systems to meet current building code requirements at a cost little different from that of new construction. The addition of the second story would also require an elevator and increased personnel to staff both floors.

The third option was a larger extension onto the adjacent lot, with ample parking available, although, as in the previous two options, a complete upgrading of the structure and systems would be required. The fourth option was the construction of a new building constructed on the adjacent lot uniquely designed to be an adaptable community library, with a subsequent possibility of selling the former library building and property. The cost for these two options was almost identical.

The fifth and last option was to do nothing to the Library building—to add no space, no expansion. This option would result in an inevitable decrease in Library services, as the building already places restrictions on current services which are not sustainable unless more space is acquired.

One question asked by an attendee concerned the method of funding a building project such as this. Madsen outlined a three-pronged approach of seeking public grants, private fund-raising, and a possible bond issue for the remainder.

The community members in attendance were invited to peruse the information about the Library and its future options on large display boards arrayed around the room, to indicate their priorities for addressing current problems and future use of expanded space, and especially to identify their preferred option for the future of the Library building. The results of the votes at these meetings are available for viewing in the Library now, and islanders are encouraged to come to the Library, see the results, take handouts, and offer their own votes. Handouts can be used as ballots, and postcards are available for comments, and can be dropped off or mailed in.

The Library Board of Trustees will make a decision on next steps in the process at their regularly scheduled Board Meeting on Tuesday, June 12, 2018 at 3:00 pm in the Library's meeting room. The public is invited to attend.