

## **QUINCY PUBLIC LIBRARY RENOVATION PROJECT**

**In an effort to answer some of the questions that have been asked regarding the renovations to the Quincy Public Library, the Library Board have prepared the below question and answers for your information and further clarification.**

**If you should have other or additional questions, please contact the Library Administration 223-1309 and extension 204.**

**Q: Why, all of a sudden, is there a need for renovation?**

**A: The need is not all-of-a-sudden. Board members have for a long time been concerned about needed updates to the building. The HVAC system has been on life support for several years. We have had concerns about other areas - primarily space and security issues. In 2005 we sought the help of an independent outside consultant to evaluate our building needs and to make recommendations for future action. The result was a 245-page report compiled by Fred Schlipf, Professor of Library Science at the University of Illinois, Director of the Free Public Library of Urbana, and building consultant. Implementing Dr. Schlipf's recommendations would have resulted in a state-of-the-art library in Quincy. The thought of a world-class library was tempting, but impractical. Dr. Schlipf estimated the cost of his proposals at about \$18 million. The Board then set out to prioritize the building needs and asked a local architect to design plans to meet the needs. Those plans ranged in cost from about \$11 million to \$15 million. Again, the Board saw that as impractical. When the Recovery Zone Economic Development Bonds became available, we sought the \$6,483,000 available to Adams County, went back to the architects and asked them to pare down the plans, eliminating anything that was not a necessity. They were asked to squeeze our top three priorities into the available funds.**

**Q: What would be the source of the money for this project?**

**A: As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the federal government is extending the bonding capacity of Adams County by \$6,483,000, an amount determined by local unemployment figures. Those bonds must be issued by December 31, 2009. The library has asked the County to allocate that money to the City and the City to allocate that money to the library. These bonds provide for a deeper federal subsidy through a refundable tax credit. In other words, we are able to access this amount at a lower cost than is possible through the County or City's normal bonding process. The money would be repaid over 20 years by a 4 cent increase in the library's tax levy. This would amount to an approximate \$12 per year increase in property taxes on a \$100,000 home.**

**Q: Why should we increase taxes when we are still in a recession?**

**A: The proposed projects will have to be undertaken eventually if the Quincy Public Library is to remain open and provide the same kinds of services it has in the past. It is unlikely that we will, at any time in the foreseeable future, be able to complete the projects without spending more money. The money made available is part of the stimulus package which was intended to “jumpstart the economy.” People may agree or disagree with its effectiveness, but this money has already been allocated. If it’s not spent in Quincy, it will be spent elsewhere. Many people would welcome an additional \$6 million in the Quincy/Adams County economy.**

**Q: Why will the HVAC cost \$2,000,000?**

**A: That number includes not only the HVAC system and installation, but also ancillary costs which could be about 25% of the total. That same system could be installed in a new building at a lower cost, but walls and ceilings will need to be torn out and replaced. There will probably be additional electrical work, and there’s no way to be certain what other repair work might be necessary. The total cost may well be less than \$2 million, but we feel to undertake the project without that much available to us would be risky. We will not spend any more than necessary.**

**Q: Why can’t you repair the part(s) of the HVAC system that are faulty and leave the rest of it alone?**

**A: The entire system is in bad repair. We have been told that to try to replace parts of it would require custom cutting of parts and that fitting everything together could be difficult. That would be a longer, more difficult, and probably more expensive project than to install a new system.**

**Q: If you have a freon leak that is costing \$500 every month, why don’t you just fix it?**

**A: The people that service our HVAC have told us if we could wait until October when the system can be shut down, it may be possible to find and repair the leak. They advise us against doing that because it is quite likely that there are multiple leaks and there almost certainly will be more, given the condition of the system. They have repeatedly warned us not to invest more money in a “dying system.”**

**Q: Given the cost of the system, is it geo-thermal?**

**A: No. We investigated that possibility but were advised that, not only would it be more expensive, we do not have the land area necessary to install an effective geo-**

thermal system. The system we plan to acquire is nearly as energy efficient as geothermal.

**Q: Why spend money on a library? Isn't library usage down due to the Internet?**

**A: No. In fact the opposite is true. Usage at the Quincy Public Library has been steadily growing. A record number of items were checked out in 2008, and 2009 appears to be setting new records. More people seek involvement in the many events held at the library than we can accommodate. During the month of June, more than 400 people were placed on waiting lists. This appears to be a nation-wide phenomenon. The Today Show recently featured a report on the increased use of public libraries in an economic downturn. Our staff has noticed an increase in the use of computers. People without internet access at home are using our computers to search for employment.**

**Q: Why will it cost so much to renovate the library when a whole new health department was just constructed for a lot less.**

**A: We've asked the same question and been given the following reasons. New construction can be cheaper than renovation. (Installation of air conditioning, for example.) Renovation projects require substantially higher contingency funds than new buildings because of the chance of finding unanticipated structural problems. The health department building is a different kind of construction than a library. Library construction typically costs about fifty per cent more than most other buildings because of the need for stronger weight-bearing floors. Architectural fees are often higher for renovation because the existing structure must be carefully analyzed. And - the library is nearly twice the size of the new health department building.**

**Q: Given the costs of renovation and the multiplicity of problems in the existing building, why not just build a new library?**

**A: That possibility has been discussed and rejected. Most of the library patrons like the current building. It still looks good. The downtown location is a good one. What could be done with the building? There's little market for buildings of this type in Quincy. Demolition would be expensive and, in all likelihood, very unpopular.**

**Q: Why move the children's department?**

**A: There are several reasons. We have outgrown our current space. There were, for example, in June of this year nearly four times as many children enrolled in the**

summer reading program as there were four years ago. Most of those wait-listed for special events were children. There are also security issues which need to be addressed. We are, for obvious reasons, reluctant to detail those issues in any kind of a public forum but would welcome the opportunity to explain them to responsible persons. We would also welcome the opportunity to tour the library with visitors and point out the problem areas. Having all of our public-use areas on one floor would eliminate the use of an unsupervised back entrance near the children's department. It would also eliminate public use of the elevator which does not meet code.

**Q: Why can't you just organize volunteers to carry the children's books upstairs to the new location?**

**A: Moving the books is a small part of the task. We would be moving to the former Alliance Library Building which was purchased several years ago when that organization moved their operation out of Quincy. That building was constructed for use as a library so it meets the necessary strong-floor requirements. Some renovation, however, would be necessary - lighting, floor covering, plumbing, etc. The primary cost would be access. The labyrinthine connection between the buildings would be altered to provide easy access and open sight-lines between the main entrance and the children's department.**

**Q: Why is it necessary to move the entrance?**

**A: Primarily because of security. A library should have only one entrance and one check-out desk. It is, as it should be, a public place. Anyone can enter. Library staff, however, should be able to see who is entering. Likewise, there should be only one exit so that neither materials nor people can leave the building unseen. A central entrance for both children and adults would enable families to come in; children would go to the right, adults to the left with neither having to maneuver narrow hallways unseen. Children would, at virtually all times, be within sight of an adult.**

**Q: Why do we need a bigger parking lot? I always find a parking place near the library. Why not leave the parking lots where they are?**

**A: Finding a convenient parking place is usually not difficult unless there are children's activities going on. Primary reasons for a new parking lot are convenience and, again, security. The current lots are small and spread out. There have been some vandalism problems. One lot, well-lighted, with easy access to all parts of the library would be more convenient. It's hard to imagine a scenario in which we would move the children's department without putting a parking lot in front of it. That would exacerbate many of the security issues we're trying to**

alleviate by separating the children from the main entrance. Also, it doesn't make much sense to park on one side of the building and enter on the other. And there are many times when more parking spaces are needed.

**Q: Would completion of the proposed projects solve all of the problems of the current building?**

**A: No.** There are major problems with storage space. Sight-lines are bad; it is easier to move around the library unseen than it should be. Parts of the stacks in the adult section are not wheelchair accessible. There are many small, hidden spaces both inside and out. The elevator is too small and doesn't meet code. Some of the carpet and furniture needs to be replaced. The Board has determined that, barring an unforeseen financial windfall, these and other issues will have to be dealt with at a later time. We are seeking private funds for some of them. The HVAC and children's needs are more imperative at this time.

**Q: Would any savings result from the proposed renovation?**

**A: Yes.** We would expect significant savings in energy costs with a more efficient HVAC system. Materials would be less likely to "walk out the door" if there were only one exit. Staff could be utilized more efficiently with one check out desk. We would be able to bring the technical services department back into the main building. Because of crowding, we've been renting space for them in the Senior Center. We've had to double schedule many events because of over-crowding. We'd probably realize a small savings there.

**Q: How long would it take to for these savings to equal the cost of the renovation?**

**A: Longer than any of us will live.** A Public Library is not a revenue-generating entity. Recent cost-benefit analyses have proven that libraries are, however, a good investment. The benefits-to-tax ratio of the libraries studied vary from about \$3:\$1 to \$10:\$1. In other words, library users receive three to ten dollars worth of services for every tax dollar spent. (If you're interested in knowing more about this research, see "Placing a Value On Public Library Services," by Glen E. Holt, et. al.). Most of the benefits of a public library are intangible and therefore not measurable. How does one measure, for example, the benefit to the community of a child who develops a love for reading, then teaches his/her children to love reading? Or of the teacher whose information and materials acquired at the library make his/her lessons more effective? Since Benjamin Franklin founded the first public library in America, libraries have been considered essential to an educated and literate populace. A community without a good public library is a community in decline. We believe that the proposed renovations will help maintain the quality of services of which the library patrons are rightfully proud.

