

OUR LIBRARY BUILDING today & tomorrow

June 2018 Community Meetings Feedback

Library Director Laurie Orton said, “It was pretty clear from the data collected that the community members were most supportive of the option to build a new library.” Of the 134 people who indicated their preferences at the open houses and in subsequent surveys, 75% chose a new building, versus 23% who chose expansion of the current structure. “Taking into account the challenges posed by the current structure and the cost for expanding and retrofitting an older building costs nearly as much as creating a new, carefully planned library from the ground up, it’s not surprising that people chose the new building option,” observed Orton.

The top three problems community members identified with the current building included inadequate and difficult parking, growth restrictions on the library’s various materials collections, and the need for larger meeting and program spaces for events, as attendance has outstripped capacity over the years. Additional high priorities included a more energy efficient, cost-saving building infrastructure, improved areas for teens and children, and more quiet reading spaces and computers.

“We are excited about the possibilities of a new, modern library,” said Orton, “but we still have a long way to go on this project.” Still remaining are site selection and acquisition, funding, design, and construction. The community will be involved at every step of the process.

Assessing Our Facilities Needs

When we ask library patrons what we could improve about our library’s facilities, the two most common answers are “more quiet space” and “parking.” In 2011, the Library surveyed the community in preparing our current Long Range Plan (for 2012-2017), and many respondents mentioned these and other facilities issues.

At the same time, the library district is facing increasing costs from building maintenance, given the age and construction of the building. We face major projects like roof replacement, improving site drainage, and ongoing efforts to keep the basement clear of water and mold.

As a result, the library district began a facilities assessment project, whose purpose is to:

- Understand the community’s needs for library space
- Understand the mechanical and maintenance issues associated with our current building and site
- Outline the options available to the community for library facilities

Facilities Assessment Process

- Beginning in 2015 the Board held four Special Work Session meetings open to the public to begin planning the process.
- In 2016 the Board testing a community survey on three focus groups. The feedback suggested that we provide more information on the state of the building and its inherent capacity for change and growth.
- In 2017 the Library hired SHKS Architects to carry out a facilities assessment and feasibility study.

Their results, with input from library staff, was presented at three community open houses in 2018:

- Sunday, May 20th from 3:00-5:00pm
- Sunday, May 20th from 7:00-9:00pm
- Monday, May 21st from 1:00-3:00pm

Minutes from Special Board Meetings, Work Sessions, and Public Forum Meetings about Library Facilities Held by the San Juan Island Library Board of Trustees

Although specific issues are often discussed at the regular monthly Board of Trustees meetings (3pm on the second Tuesday of each month, in the library meeting room), we also conduct special board meetings, dedicated work sessions, and public forum meetings. Any meeting we conduct is an open public meeting, which we advertise in the newspaper, and the public is welcome.

The notes and minutes from these meetings are kept along with the regular Board of Trustees meeting minutes located on our website.