

THE NEW FERGUS CARNEGIE LIBRARY UNVEILED



New Fergus library concept revealed March 20, 2012

Article courtesy of Francis Baker - News Express Staff

The new Fergus library branch will be a “crown jewel” of the county library system.

Members of the county library board approved a concept plan and awarded the architect’s contract for the project to Ventin Group architects, at last week’s library board meeting, which was held in the children’s department of the Fergus branch.

The concept design shows a huge addition behind the current century-old Carnegie building, increasing the library’s area from 5,000 to 15,000 square feet.

The addition will fill most of the space behind the current library, to the walkway beside the river, and will also extend behind the building east of the library. An earlier expansion added to the Carnegie building, now housing the children’s department and adult stacks, is expected to be removed as part of the renovation and replaced with new building.

According to concept drawings, the current front entrance will be renovated to create a street-level accessible entrance, and there will be another totally accessible entrance from the rear parking lot.

Book stacks and a large meeting room are expected to be on the second floor, with offices and other program or meeting space on the ground level.

The concept design was what won the Ventin Group the contract to design the project - the firm, along with Grinham who designed renovations to the Elora library, competed for the work.

Exact design details are yet to be worked out, the library board heard, in meetings between chief librarian Murray McCabe, county staff and the architects. Included in those discussions could be moving the county library’s administration staff

Artists concept rendering.



View from Grand River

who are currently at the Aboyne branch, to the Fergus branch.

“The logical place for the administration staff is at the largest branch in the centre of the county,” CAO Scott Wilson said. When renovations are complete, that’s going to be the Fergus branch.

Centre Wellington ward councillor Jean Innes asked whether there should be a discussion about moving the administration staff to Fergus before the next design committee meeting.

“We’ve never had a discussion about moving the staff from Aboyne to here,” Innes said - or about how moving the staff would impact the Aboyne branch.

But whether administration moves locations may not even be a

board decision, member Brad Whitcombe said - he believes it’s a decision for the chief librarian and staff.

There has to be further work done to create the finished design, Warden Chris White said, pointing out the vote at the meeting is only to approve the general concept - many more details have to be worked out.

“No decision (on moving staffing or detailed design) is being made here today,” he said. “If we’re going to spend a large amount of money on a crown jewel library we should make sure there are efficiencies to support that.”

That could mean looking at how the Aboyne branch fits into the county library’s overall plan, and where administration staff



Concept rendering. View from rear



Concept rendering. Side entrance

will be located. "It's a good question and it will be answered, just not today," he said. Meanwhile, the chief librarian reported more than 200 surveys about the Fergus library renovation had been tabulated by the beginning of March.

Increased collection, more space, interesting and comfortable interior and maintaining a downtown location were among the features people want to see in the new library.

Other ideas suggested included protecting the heritage design and being sympathetic to surrounding buildings, including a full elevator and making the building completely accessible, separating adult, teen and children's areas, and keeping environmentally friendly design and operations.

"It's a good indication from people who come here on a regular basis on what they want to see," McCabe said.

The survey included many positive comments on staff, services and programs. People also expressed concerns that library service continue at a temporary location - preferably downtown - during the renovations. The county hopes to tender the project later this spring, with construction starting later this year, to be completed in 2013.

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Concept rendering. Side Elevation