



Staff report

To: Library Board of Trustees
From: Margaret Jakubcin, Library Director
Date: March 16, 2017
Subject: Sequim Branch Expansion Project – Informational Update

Recommendation. This report is provided primarily for informational purposes. No action is required, however the Board may wish to discuss the current status of the project and provide additional or different direction to staff regarding the upcoming actions proposed below.

Historical Background. Expansion of the Sequim Branch library has been a pressing concern and topic of periodic discussion for a number of years. Detailed historical background has been shared with the NOLS Board previously. A brief recap is provided below; other NOLS concerns and initiatives extant during this time period are included for context.

Through the years, several different approaches for expanding space at the Sequim Branch have been explored by a number of different advisory committees and workgroups. These proposals were considered in the context of influencing factors, and for one reason or another a determination was made not to proceed with proposals raised in the past.

Initiative I-747, the property tax limitation legislation that went into effect in 2001, strongly impacted NOLS' inclination and ability to undertake a Sequim Branch expansion. It was recognized that moving forward with a bond election prior to resolving operational budget challenges created by I-747 had serious fiscal, as well as and political, implications.

Recognizing that there would be no quick fix to the Sequim facility problem, in 2009 NOLS, with noteworthy financial support from the Friends of Sequim Library, undertook a major facelift of the existing facility. The 2009 remodel addressed deferred maintenance issues (such as failing HVAC system, failing septic system, maxed-out electrical system, and leaking sky lights), updated and improved operational and technological functionality, reconfigured floorplans and layout to increase efficiency of space use, and generally spruced up a facility that had become worn, outdated, and shabby in the extreme. The remodel did not, however, add any additional square footage to the branch. During the ensuing years NOLS has continued to conscientiously maintain the building, furnishings, and landscaping, and continue to enhance comfort and functionality. In making decisions about capital upkeep and improvement of the Sequim Branch, extreme care has been taken to exercise responsible stewardship by balancing continued investment in the existing infrastructure against possible demolition of the current building as part of a future expansion project.

In 2010 NOLS succeeded in passing a levy lid lift, restoring NOLS' levy rate to the maximum statutory rate of 50¢ per \$1000 of assessed valuation. This alleviated, for the time being, the steady downward erosion of the tax revenues that support library operations, and allowed NOLS to move forward with implementation of the major improvements to services, collection, staffing, and expanded hours that had been promised as part of the 2012 Business Plan.

During 2011 and 2012 NOLS was heavily engaged in implementing the 2012 Plan, generally improving community access and service, and raising the Library's profile in the community, through a number of strategic indicatives.

In 2013, with substantive implementation of the 2012 Plan complete, NOLS again turned attention to the Sequim Project. A Feasibility Study, conducted in 2013-14, was the next planning step in the Sequim Branch expansion effort. This study updated and expanded on the work of prior studies and proposals, and answered four critical preliminary planning questions. See additional information about the Feasibility Study, below. Research and analysis done at this time also confirmed that the most viable option for funding a major Sequim Branch expansion would be through voter approved creation and funding of a Library Capital Facilities Area (LCFA) and bond.

Upon completion of the Feasibility Study in 2014, the NOLS Board directed staff to initiate a Conceptual Planning/Schematic Design process, specifying that there should be substantial community input to this process. The Board also authorized funding to support this phase of the project. Staff subsequently developed a roadmap and general timeline for the Conceptual Planning/Schematic Design phase. See additional information about below.

The Board decision to move forward with the next phase of an expansion project coincided with a leadership change at NOLS). During the transition period that followed retirement of the previous Library Director, planned and unplanned administrative staffing reductions, and various critical and time sensitive administrative priorities, limited the availability of key staff to maintain strong forward momentum on the Sequim expansion project.

Nonetheless, in 2015 a small but dedicated taskforce of concerned citizens was assembled. The primary role of the Community Taskforce on Sequim Library Expansion (CTSLE) was to support and facilitate progress on the three activity paths of the Conceptual Planning phase. The scope of the committee's work is discussed in more detail below.

During 2016, as a result of several unavoidable library circumstances, coupled with attrition on the CTSLE, progress on this project largely lapsed. The Library's originally anticipated timeline was also influenced by consideration of other community factors, including the significant bond issues being pursued by other community entities in the Sequim/Dungeness area during this period.

Recap of the Feasibility Study. This study updated and expanded on the work of prior studies, and answered four critical preliminary planning questions.

1. Is a larger branch library needed to meet the current and future needs of Sequim Dungeness Valley community?

(The existing 6000 sq. ft. facility provides 0.2 sq. ft. of library space per capita based on current population figures. Standards for similar rural library systems in the region are 0.5 sq. ft. per capita. The Sequim Branch is extremely undersized even to serve the current population of approximately 29,728. Community surveys and engagement activities also supported this conclusion).

2. If so, how large would the Sequim Library need to be to serve the projected population for the next 30 years?

(Projected population growth through 2043 was calculated at approximately 34,300. Using 0.5 sq. ft. per capita as the standard, this would require a building of approximately 17,150 sq. ft.).

3. Can a library of that size (including all legally required sizing components, such as parking and access right of ways) be constructed on the existing site already owned by NOLS?

(The long, narrow site poses certain challenges, but this is feasible).

4. Approximately what would such a building cost to construct?

(The cost estimate provided was \$6,968,336 (in 2014). This was based on a formulaic cost per square foot calculation. The study correctly noted that this cost estimate was for preliminary planning only, does not reflect specific local needs or emerging library trends, and that planning for a larger library should include a more detailed program analysis to predict costs more accurately) .

Discussion.

It must be acknowledged that the slow progress toward resolving the challenges presented by the undersized and dated Sequim Branch facility has been tremendously frustrating for everyone involved; library users, interested community members, branch staff, Board members, and, not least of all, the Library Director.

At this point in time the Sequim Project is one of a small handful of top priorities for NOLS. It must still be prioritized in relation to other important initiatives, however, the Library Director and Sequim Branch Manager, the two staff on whom time demands of this project will fall most heavily, have prioritized their other responsibilities and are committed to moving the next phase of the Sequim Expansion project forward as expeditiously as possible during 2017 and 2018.

There are also a number of other considerations that may be indicators that the time is finally ripe for this project.

- By conscientiously implementing the 2012 Plan, NOLS has demonstrated a track record of making good on election promises.
- Strong emphasis on developing and expanding the library collection, programming, customer service, and marketing, has raised the Library's public profile significantly.
- Through a successful levy lid lift and strong support from Friends groups, NOLS has improved fiscal stability.
- Other local community bond/taxing issues have apparently been resolved for the time being.
- 2018 appears to be a viable and achievable target election date, should the Board ultimately decide to place a ballot issue before the voters.

Next Steps – Conceptual Planning Phase

The following is a summary of the three distinct, but overlapping, activity paths that must occur during the next phase of this project. These activity paths have been described and discussed with the Board on prior occasions. In the following summary implementation details have been updated to reflect current NOLS realities and progress already made on the project. The activity paths are not listed in linear or chronological order – by the nature of the activities they are intended and expected to occur in interlocking and ongoing patterns.

Activity path 1: Community engagement

Community support is enhanced through strong information/education campaigns, and is essential to the success of library building projects. Community engagement will continue to be an integral part of all aspects of the planning process for a larger Sequim Library.

- Re-vitalize the Community Taskforce on Sequim Library Expansion (Staff, CTSLE). See CTSLE Scope of Work information, below.
- Continue to expand the public information campaign through direct communications and community presentations. (Staff, with Board and CTSLE).
- Initiate preliminary conversations with City Council/staff and County Commissioners, and other significant local stakeholders (Staff, Board).
- Conduct/participate in public input meetings as part of schematic design process with architect (Board, staff, CTSLE, and community).

Activity path 2: Schematic Design

This group of activities requires the professional assistance of an architect. Outcomes from “Schematic Design” include: a detailed building program which establishes square footages needed for all aspects of building/grounds function; schematic visuals depicting optimal relational layouts for the required library/grounds spaces; determination of general architectural/construction cost factors; and a project budget based on all these details.

- Issue Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for architectural services to develop building program, schematic design and project budget; receive proposals (Staff, with Board authorization)
- Approve contract for architectural services/schematic design (Board)
- Participate with architect in building program development activities (Staff)
- Participate in schematic design process with architect (Board, Staff, CTSLE) and community
- Approve building program, schematic design, and project budget (Board).

Activity path 3: Library Capital Facilities Area (LCFA) formation

Prior research has determined that the most probable source of funding to support a Sequim Branch expansion project lies in creation and funding of a Library Capital Facilities Area (LCFA) and bond. This is a highly complex process, which has been discussed with the Board previously (and will be again). The following bullet points summarize LCFA-related tasks to occur primarily during the Conceptual Planning phase.

- Secure services of attorney and other professionals to advise the District on Library Capital Facilities Area (LCFA) requirements. (Staff)
- Develop target dates/timeline for LCFA activities (Staff, CTSLE, Board)
- Decide whether to place LCFA bond on a ballot (Board, through resolution)
- Present information to Clallam County Commissioners and staff to educate them about LCFA RCWs and NOLS' recommended process and timeline, and to answer their questions. (Staff, Board, and CTSLE)
- Present information to Sequim City Council and staff about LCFA RCWs and NOLS' recommended process and timeline, and answer their questions. (Staff, Board, and CTSLE)
- Present final information gleaned from all Activity Paths to Board and make recommendations regarding an LCFA. (Staff, CTSLE)

CTSLE Scope of Work.

- Facilitate community input to schematic design process
- Solicit and incorporate community input into work with staff and architect
- Assist with education/information campaign
- Research and analyze timing, timeline, and plan for LCFA election
- Make recommendations to NOLS Board on election strategy, timeline, public involvement
- Provide a citizen-based nucleus around which a campaign committee may form

Draft Timeline/Tasklist.

The following is a tentative summary timeline. There are a number of interlocking issues, related to both this and other library projects, which may necessitate adjustment. Naturally, as

the Conceptual Planning process moves forward, the timeline will become more specific and the task list more detailed.

- Ongoing throughout: Community engagement through presentations and community meetings and conversations.
- April/May 2017 - Staff issue RFQ for architectural services.
- Spring/Summer 2017 - CTSLE revitalized and begins work on LCFA preliminaries
- Summer 2017 - RFQ responses received and reviewed. Contract negotiated.
- Summer/Fall 2017 - Building Program/Schematic Design process begins.
- Winter 2017/18 – Building Program/Schematic Design concludes.
- Winter/Spring 2018 – recommendation to Board and decision whether to proceed with placing a bond measure on a 2018 ballot.
- Spring 2018 – Board decision regarding LCFA ballot.
- November 2018 – earliest likely date for LCFA election. (Per LCFA requirements, such votes may occur only on Primary or General election ballots. There is currently a move underway to reschedule the WA Primary to an earlier date, so the probable 2018 Primary date is unknown at this time).

Fiscal and Policy considerations. The Board has previously authorized funds for Building Project/Schematic design activities.

Alternatives considered. Recognizing that some time has passed since the Board issued instructions to staff regarding the proposed next steps. The Board may wish to revise, alter, or update those instructions at this time.