

Written by Nemaha County Herald
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By Darrell Wellman

The Auburn Memorial Library's proposed expansion project was a discussion item for the Feb. 16 Auburn Community Redevelopment Authority meeting.

Dick Hahn with the Auburn Library Board shared details from statistical report for Fiscal Year 2009 prepared by Library Director Sherry Black. Highlights of that report follow:

- 7,488 patrons used the library's computers.
- The number of registered card holders is 3,465.
- There were 32,478 people who visited the library.
- The library hosted 41 children's programs, including the Summer Reading Program during which 2,783 books were read. There were 820 children who attended these special programs.
- Auburn Memorial Library offered two sessions of both Toddler and Pre-School Storytime, as well as a visit from Santa.

Hahn said the Library Board recognizes two reasons to build on to the existing structure:

1. The need to build a new computer area.
2. The children's area isn't large enough for programs currently being held there.

Addition/Remodeling Details

Hahn said plans prepared prior to the start of the ongoing library fund raising campaign have an estimated total project cost of \$688,000. Plans are to renovate the existing library and add 2,600 square feet of new space. Key features of this project include the conversion of the current meeting room to house up to 15 computers; the addition of a new dedicated children's area offering an inviting space for children to read and explore; and a new conference room accommodating up to 70 people, which would be a great community asset.

Hahn said the Library Board has applied for several grants and looked for other funding and financing options. He reported that the USDA would make a 4 percent loan available to the library and provide 15% of the total cost or approximately \$105,000. They are also seeking a \$200,000 Peter Kiewit Foundation grant and have already raised \$304,000 in donations and pledges from the private sector.

"There are people out there who have indicated that they will contribute towards the library remodeling/expansion once they see that we have broken ground. We believe we are about \$100,000 short of being at that phase now," he commented. Hahn said he anticipated ground breaking could take place this fall if the financing falls into place.

CRA Committee Chairman Dennis Wittmann and Hahn reported on informal discussions between Auburn Library Board and Board of Public Works members on whether the utility could help provide some funding. A suggestion has been made that the BPW use the Tax Increment Financing funds collected to date for the Northwest Sanitary Sewer Project which actually never existed, according to Hahn. The amount in this account was slightly over \$101,000 as of late. Wittmann has spoken with CRA attorney Marc Abbott about possible ways to transfer those funds should the decision be made to do so. He said the lawyer indicated that the action could take place if all parties involved agreed to do so.

CRA member Darrell Kruse told the library representatives, "The CRA would need written documentation from the BPW stipulating that they are willing to release those [Northwest Sanitary Sewer] funds. The possibility of pursuing this action was tentatively planned for the March 8 Board of Public Works meeting. Monday's meeting begins at noon in the BPW conference room.

CRA Discusses Possibility of Making Funds Available to Auburn Memorial Library Addition/Renovation

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The next CRA meeting will begin noon Tuesday, March 9 at City Hall.