

## ■ CENTER

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saying, 'you tell us what fits here.' They are going to be looking at whether we can support conferences, university-related activities, trade shows, touring and performing events, and local arts and cultural events," Howe said. "We just started with the idea that we need a place to hold meetings, and they're going to determine if the community can support these other activities as well."

Vermillion, with its proximity to Sioux Falls and Sioux City, IA – large cities with the resources to host large conventions – will likely see if it can fill a niche of a smaller scale.

"Our view is that we are looking to be an option for a lot of these municipal and regional conferences that are held in the state or region, and a lot of university-related conferences – we might be home to those as well," Howe said.

CSL spells out, in great detail, the approach it will soon take to determine whether a conference center is feasible in Vermillion. It will first conduct a market demand analysis. The purpose of this study is to define and evaluate the local market characteristics of the Vermillion area as well as the existing event facility infrastructure, such as conference, meeting, civic and spectator/event facilities.

This analysis will be a three-step process in which Vermillion's existing market conditions, comparable and competitive facilities will be analyzed, followed by a market survey.

Characteristics of Vermillion to be evaluated as part of this overall analysis task include inventory of hotel properties and committable rooms; existing/planned conference, event and hotel facilities in the local area; key demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and trends, such as population, disposable income, retail sales, entertainment spending, corporate base and other such indicators; and accessibility; entertainment offerings and attractions.

"They're going to be evaluating all of the existing space that we have in town, what the square footage is, and what the seasonality of our community is," he said. "They're going to be studying all of those things in depth."

The consulting firm will also perform a market supportable facility program analysis, and a study of event levels and characteristics.

The CSL staff will contact local, state and regional associations, universities, corporations, and service organizations to see if they would be interested in holding conferences and meetings in Vermillion. "They will also be talking with event organizers and booking companies to see if they would be willing to come here," Howe said.

### WHAT MAY WORK BEST?

Ultimately, the consultants will use all of the data they collect to recommend the type of conference center they believe will be successful in the community.

"They will take all of the information they will gather and will say what type of facility could be supported," Howe said. "That might be a standalone conference

center, or it might be facility that has to be associated with a hotel. They are going to take the results of that survey and identify what type of facility would be appropriate, if any.

"They might come back and say 'No. You can't support a facility of any size or any scope. And we're prepared for that answer as well,'" he said.

Should the study affirm that a conference center would succeed in Vermillion, the consultants will eventually offer suggestions on the size of the facility that can be supported here, and the types of events that the community should seek.

"They will be taking a pretty well-rounded, in-depth approach to this study," Howe said.

Should the study favor the construction of conference facility, local planners will begin exploring ways to fund its construction.

"Our initial feeling is that this will have to be a joint public and private partnership," Howe said. "We feel that there will have to be some Vermillion tax and/or fee structure going into help pay for this. We would envision that maybe one of our hotels would be an investment partner, the city would be an investment partner and potentially individual investors or individual investor groups would be a partner in it as well."

### HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Community leaders began exploring the feasibility of constructing a conference facility of some type here last year.

"We called together a group of citizens from the community to get some feedback on whether or not there is a demand for a conference

center in the community. The conversations have been going on for several months," Howe said. "We took that original meeting that we had, with 20 or 30 members of the community, and came out of that with a desire to continue the conversation with a smaller group. We believed that a smaller group would be more effective."

That smaller group – the conference center task force – continued exploring the idea and concluded a feasibility study was needed.

"It just seemed appropriate that if we were going to ask some of our hotels, for instance, to make an investment in their properties, that we would need to do a feasibility study and show them that it was a viable idea," he said. "The same thing with the city – if we were going to ask the city for assistance in this, then we are going to have to show that this is a viable project."

Howe and other Vermillion citizens have visited communities in the region that are the homes to convention centers. The feedback they've gotten from citizens in those communities provided some valuable information about how best to approach such a project.

"In talking with those people, it became apparent that for a community our size, we are going to need some level of public assistance, whether that be implementation of a room fee like they've done in Sioux Falls, or the allocation of some of the bed, board and booze tax," Howe said. "If there is a need for any sort of allocation of public funds, then we need to have a feasibility study to show the city council and the public that this is a viable project."

the end of the year.

"I think this is exciting for our community, and this is just a tremendous gift – above and beyond what we could ever expect," the mayor said.

City Manager John Prescott said the available sales tax revenue, the block grant and Siegrist's donation combined provides just under \$2.4 million to construct the library addition and renovation.

"The architect's estimate last year when they developed a schematic design for another grant application came up with a project of about \$3 million, and obviously we're talking about a \$600,000 gap," Prescott said. "I want to clarify, though, that we aren't really talking about that gap. That \$3 million price tag included the architectural fees, and to date the library board has been paying all of those."

That \$3 million estimate also included some sidework and landscaping, which the city will be able to do on its own to save money, Prescott said.

Local funding will be needed to cover contingency funding for the architect, and an alternative to the

bid that may allow, if needed in the future, a second floor to be added to the library.

### FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

Some needed fixtures for the library addition are included in the \$3 million budget proposed by the architect for the project. One way to lessen the city's expenses will be through a fundraising campaign for needed items in the expanded library that don't fall under the category of brick and mortar.

Roger Kozak, co-chair of this campaign to raise local funds for the library project, noted the Siegrist's donation, along with the funds budgeted by the city through taxes and grant revenue, should take care of the construction part of the library expansion.

"With all of that good financing in place, now we need to look at the furnishings," he said.

Kozak said the fundraising campaign has a goal of raising \$200,000.

"You might say, 'wow, that's a lot of money.' But I really look at that as not being a large sum when you consider what it is you are going to

be receiving in our community," he said. "So our challenge will be to go out to raise the necessary funds to acquire those furnishings."

"To do that, I think that all of us have to be aware that the needs of the library continue to change year after year after year," Kozak said.

Today's libraries feature technological advances ranging from computers to internet access, and they serve people of all ages – from infants to retired people, he said.

"They are truly resources that help us get through our daily lives," Kozak said. "It is important that Vermillion not only have a library like that to support its citizenry, but also to support the region. This is a first class project, and we want to see that the furnishings that go into

this library expansion project are first class."

The fundraising effort is in its formative stages, he said. "We want to give everyone an opportunity to perhaps leave a legacy of their own."

That could be done by people who are able to give larger gifts to the library to fund development of specific areas of the interior.

"We also want to extend that downward as far as we can," Kozak said. "Hopefully, we can get classes of students in our public schools to put a project together to help fund, for example, something in the area of technology."

The expanded library will need tables and chairs for both adults and children, stacks, shelving and other furnishings.

## ■ SDPB

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"We found some radio programs that were recorded back in the '50s and reel-to-reel tapes and videotapes of programs that were recorded in the '50s and '60s," Miller said. "Last night I was spending a little time trying to pinpoint the day (of) this particular newscast we had found. ... We've narrowed it down between August and September of 1958, because they're talking about Eisenhower as president and the bombing of these islands in the straight near Taiwan."

Video of former University of South Dakota professor John Milton interviewing authors and audio of Ben Black Elk performing traditional Lakota songs in 1962 also have been discovered.

"Some things are of a truly historic nature, some things are more interesting and fun than they are significant. There will be a lot of good memories for people who have been in the area for quite a while," Miller said.

Visitors will be able to record their own memories via the Tell-A-Story Booth, which is owned by Fresh Produce, a Sioux Falls ad agency.

"They got hold of a 1960s telephone booth, and they changed the phone into a recording device," Miller explained. "You pick up the receiver, dial zero for the operator, and instead of actually ringing, you are set up basically to record. You use it to tell a story, and we'll have that booth here. People who have memories of South Dakota Public Broadcasting through the years (can) go in there and tell a story. ... It's a unique way of archiving their memories."

At the conclusion of the open house, memory-sharing will continue at Carey's Bar, where music will be provided by the Public Domain Tune Band.

Miller stressed that the open house is free and open to everyone, regardless of how long they wish to stay.

"You can spend five minutes or three hours

"There is a lot of work to be done," he said, "but I'm confident that our community will rally around our need to make our library the first class facility that it needs to be."

Kozak said it is hoped to have over 90 percent of the fundraising campaign complete in about three months' time.

"There's no reason to kid around. It's our community ... we want the library board to be there," he said, speaking in terms of local revenue-raising activity, "we want the library foundations members to be there, we want the business community to be there, and I think they will be."

## ■ LIBRARY

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had obtained a \$200,000 Community Development Block Grant award, and had \$1.4 million of second penny sales tax revenue available.

"We regret that Edith will not see the completion of the fruits of her generous donation in the construction and renovation," Powell said. He noted that Vermillion's residents will enjoy the impact of her gift for decades to come.

"Neither the Vermillion City Council nor our residents can truly appreciate the magnitude of Edith's gift. She has provided a legacy gift through the library renovation and expansion project that will make Vermillion a better place for generations to come," he said.

In July, the Vermillion City Council authorized an architectural firm to proceed with the design and to prepare bid specifications. The city plans to break ground for the project before

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