

LIBRARY

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Architects estimate that the project will take approximately a year to complete.

The library expansion has been on the city's "wish list" of projects to complete for years now, and was given new life last summer when a Vermillion citizen who wished to remain anonymous until work was complete donated \$800,000 toward completion of the project.

The funds came from Edith Siegrist, who was educated in a one-room schoolhouse and worked as clerk and an elementary school teacher before eventually becoming a renowned librarian in South Dakota.

She received her masters of library science and graduated with high honors from the University of Denver. After working for six years as a school librarian in Lansing, MI, she began a 24-year career as librarian science professor at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion.

Last July, two weeks after finalizing arrangements for her significant financial donation toward the city library expansion, Siegrist, 86, died in Vermillion Sanford Hospital.

Her last act breathed new life into the project, prompting community leaders to forge ahead despite the possible funding challenges that may still remain.

"It's pretty exciting for us to get to this point, and I thank the board for their support, to the council for their support, and we're excited about this and are ready to go forward," Carl Gutzman, vice chairman of the library's board of trustees, told the city council. "We think it's a good thing for the city and I

hope you agree with that."

"I've been on the library board for three or four years. I've worked there before when I was the children's librarian," said Fern Kaufman. "I really, thoroughly enjoy the library, and I know many people in this community do. It's a very necessary part of our community."

"I have been talking to you singularly and severally about this for a long time, and this is really important," Jon Flanagin, president of the library board, said to aldermen at the Dec. 5 city council meeting. "This is something that you need to do for the community, and I'm delighted that we are to this point, and I'm delighted that we are going to go ahead with this."

Hoping for favorable bids

"At this point - and I understand what the estimated cost is and that what the actual bids are going to come back as, we don't know," Alderman Tom Davies said. "If the actual bids come back at what the budgeted construction costs are, do we have enough funding set aside in order to pay for this?"

"If the architectural firm is right, and I hope that they're not, their cost estimates exceed what we have right now," replied City Manager John Prescott. "The council appropriated \$1.4 million in second penny money, the gift from Edith Siegrist came in at just over \$800,000, and we have a Community Development Block Grant that, after the administrative costs are paid to SECOG, nets us \$192,500."

"If you take the construction project budget cost minus those dollars, you've got about a \$320,000 gap," he said. "You have to add on some testing and some architectural fees, and I've not included in there the furnishings because the Library

Foundation Board and friends, through the work that they are doing, are raising funds for that aspect of it."

Additional funds available to the city include certificates of deposit pledged to the city by the library board totaling approximately \$120,000.

"You work those numbers together, and you're looking at an amount between \$300,000 to \$400,000 that there is a little bit of a shortfall," Prescott said. "We're hoping that we get a couple of favorable things - one is a favorable construction bid."

Some items have been identified as possible bid alternates, in other words, items that could be taken cut from the project's current design. They include exterior piers, skylights and a circulation desk.

At best, removing those items from the project's drawing board would save approximately \$65,000.

"We continue to look for ways to reduce the cost of this project," Prescott said. "Our other (city) departments have been a great help; the street guys helped clear the area just north of the building to remove some of those costs from the project."

The city water department will also make any needed alterations to waterlines leading to the building.

"We're looking for everything we can. That way, we can allow the contractor to really focus on building the building," Prescott said.

Other action the city could take, should the possibility of a funding shortfall become reality, is to tap into additional city revenue in the next budget year.

"The way this project is set up, we're looking at construction starting in the 2012 budget year. As a council, you would have the opportunity

when you are looking at the 2013 budget - if you wanted to apply some additional second penny funds if we are indeed short and the bids come in at the architect's estimate or higher - to come back to funding that through the second penny," Prescott told the aldermen.

"In most of our projects, the architects miss the high bid, and we're hopeful that will be the case this time," he said.

According to construction documents prepared by Architecture Incorporated, the work will be divided into five phases, beginning with the construction of the library's north and south additions. That work will begin most likely next April.

Once new mechanical equipment is in operation, phase two of the work will likely begin in October 2012. This will involve removing equipment from the existing mechanical room and remodeling that space into restrooms. Existing condensing units also will be replaced with a new chiller.

The third phase of work, estimated to begin in November 2012, will involve moving the library operations into the new addition. Staff likely will consider leaving the current workroom operational and building an interior "tunnel" from the existing work area to the north addition.

The fourth phase of the project will involve remodeling the existing library, except for the workroom. This portion of the project will likely begin in December 2012.

Phase five has been identified as moving workroom operations into the remodeled area temporarily while the workroom is being remodeled. This work will likely begin in March 2013, and all of the work will wrap up in April 2013.

Foundation reaches out

The Clay-Union Foundation is reaching out to the community to match area youth and continue the program. A female USD student is seeking a 13-16 year old girl to be friends with her, and a 14-year-old boy in Vermillion is hoping to find an adult male friend to spend some time with him. Additional youth age 5-17 are invited to join throughout Clay and Union counties, including Beresford, Wakonda, Alcester, Elk Point and southern Union County.

Program sponsors, as well as businesses who will give a tour of their facility and a light snack, are also needed. Contact John Gille at 605-421-5050, or email jgille60@yahoo.com for more information on joining the program as a member, sponsor or volunteer.

FROKE

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to the one-time funding of \$97 per pupil that we had last year," Froke said. "The seven-tenths of a percent represents \$30.73, so we're going to have \$66.28 less (per pupil) in the one-time funding."

"Overall, we will have \$34.68 per pupil when you compare all of the funding from last year to all of the proposed funding now," he said.

Froke noted that the \$8.4 million in one-time funding for teacher training would go directly to teachers rather than school districts. The funding has been allocated to provide a variety of training in Common Core Academic Standards, the South Dakota My Life counseling program, science instruction, and other areas.

"A lot of things - we're out ahead of the game in training a number of our teachers, so we have a question of how that is going to play in concerning our teachers that have been participating in this (training) already," Froke said, "and if there will be any stipends for them."

The \$8.4 million equates to about \$800 for each teacher in the state. Multiply \$800 by the number of teachers employed by the Vermillion School District, "and that represents about two teachers' salaries for us," Froke said.

"This is just a start. We have another long legislative session ahead, and this could definitely change, but this is the path that has been laid out there," he said. "The funding presents some challenges for us."

TIME

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father am I? Everybody just said, 'Well, you're like the rest of us.'"

To help compensate, the unit had an enormous dinner that lasted for three hours.

"There was more than anybody had ever eaten," Aakre said. "We mostly just talked through it - munch and eat and talk. ... You got to see everybody's tradition, and what was important to them."

Aakre also arranged a bit of fun by renting three camels, one of which he describes as "huge."

"If you wanted to get on that camel, the Bedouins would make him sit down, you'd jump on him, they'd make him stand up and we'd take pictures like crazy," he said. "And then run like crazy to the Internet and say, 'Dear folks, I know you're at Grandma's today and you're

having a wonderful time, but look at what I'm doing!'"

Being in a poverty-stricken country like Iraq puts things in perspective, Aakre said.

"We have so much and we don't really appreciate it," he said. "We saw kids playing with soccer balls made out of rags. No shoes. They were just happier than clams to have something to play with."

Before the 153rd left Iraq, they delivered to the children one dozen soccer balls, three needles and an air pump that were donated by a church in Arizona.

"When they gave those kids a soccer ball they thought they were in Heaven. Now they're pros," Aakre said. "Something that small meant so very, very much to them."

This point was driven home to Aakre when he would go fishing at a nearby river, which he describes as "unbelievably filthy."

"The water is just as black as

a Diet Coke," he said. "All the sewage goes in the river, you've got dead camels in the river, you've got women washing clothes in the river and guys with gas stations dumping their oil in the river. And kids swimming in the river."

Despite this, the river was home to many Eurasian carp, which Aakre would catch in his spare time.

"As soon as I'd catch one, there'd be a little kids sitting there with his hands out," he said. "I'd say, 'Where did that

little rascal come from?' They just seemed to come right out of the ground."

Once the child had the fish, he would take it home to one of the tiny makeshift houses standing nearby.

"(His mother) had a small hatchet there, and she'd just chop it into chunks - didn't scale it or gut it - throw it in the frying pan, dump in some rice and they'd all sit down and eat," Aakre said. "I'd catch another fish, they'd run up."

The holiday season can be

lonely even for those who aren't overseas, which is why the Aakres open their home to friends who would otherwise be alone.

"We had 13 people at Thanksgiving. We do the same thing at Christmas," he said. "We believe the church has to be a family, and if they're family, you invite your family over."

The memories that come from spending time with family are some of the biggest reasons the season is so special, Aakre said.

"There's nothing better than a kid having a present, sitting down, throwing the present in the corner and playing with the box," he laughed.

- Look in future issues of the Vermillion Plain Talk to find stories where local church leaders give their views on the holiday season.

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