

## **Library supporters outline expansion plan**

**By Jeanne Davant**

Manitou Springs has a rare jewel in its 1910 Carnegie library. The building's exterior has been polished to its original splendor through a restoration project completed earlier this year. Now, library supporters say, it's time to set new goals — expansion of the library and assuring funding so it will continue to serve Manitou's needs for the next 100 years.

Expansion is not just a wish, it's a necessity, library representatives told City Council at a work session Tuesday night.

The library serves many community needs, Librarian Margaret Morris said. It serves as a free and open resource for everyone; an education and recreation center through classes, training and programs; an after-school and day care center; a job opportunity center; and a first stop for tourists and people relocating to Manitou.

But the building's space is no longer adequate to serve its patrons, even for basic functions. There are waiting lists for children's reading programs and computer use because of space limitations.

City fire regulations set maximum occupancy at 19, a number that's exceeded every day. There are exposed wires throughout the building and too few outlets to carry the present-day load.

The library serves as a repository for irreplaceable city records, historic documents and photos, but there is no money or space for archiving and preserving them. The vault, where many of these documents are stored, is leaking. Morris fears that without action, much of the history of Manitou will be lost.

In addition, no part of the library meets federal accessibility requirements.

Built at a time when Manitou's population was around 2,000, the library now serves a population more than twice that size. It is one of the few libraries in the United States constructed through the generosity of steel magnate Andrew Carnegie that is still operating as a library.

The Friends of the Library formed in 2002 to raise money for restoration of the building's exterior and for expansion. The Friends have raised more than \$300,000 for the library, Friends President Laura Ettinger said.

The Friends group and library board of directors have been planning for an expansion since the beginning of this centennial year. They have proposed an expansion of the current 2,800-square-foot space to slightly over 10,000 square feet at an estimated cost of \$1.8 million.

They held a community charette to determine the community's wishes and learned that handicap access and facilities, community meeting space, a children's reading and activities area, quiet reading and study space and a technology center are the most desired features.

And they hired the firm of Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle Ltd. of Minneapolis to prepare a "Path Forward" document that would guide them in the steps needed to accomplish the expansion. This architecture and interior design firm specializes in restoring and renovating historic libraries, Library Board President Andrea Marko said. The firm has been involved in projects including renovation of the U.S. Senate Library, the Kendall Young Library in Webster City, Iowa, and the Minneapolis Public Library.

The Friends and board members also have been investigating finances for the expansion, as well as funds to assure the library can continue to operate.

The library currently is funded by an annual allocation from the city, which has shrunk to about \$160,000, plus grants and donations. With the city increasingly tightening its belt and sales tax revenues variable and uncertain, library patrons are worried that could be cut further.

That's why they are looking at other ways to support the library, including partnerships with other library districts.

Discussions are under way with the Pikes Peak Library District about the possibility of a partnership. Morris said she expects to hear later this month whether the district is interested in pursuing that option.

Other scenarios that could be considered are a partnership with the Rampart Range Library District in Teller County or the formation of a new Special District that would encompass the same territory as School District 14.

The library representatives also proposed several scenarios under which the library would remain part of the city, including a dedicated mill levy or bond issue in addition to or instead of continued support from city sales tax revenues.

Each of these solutions has its own pros and cons, and any property tax increase would have to be approved by the voters, Morris said.

Councilwoman Ingrid Richter said she did not favor a partnership with the Rampart district. She suggested that the Friends, board and Morris explore the costs and obligations under the other scenarios, and also consider an agreement with the Pikes Peak Library District as an alternative to joining it.

"That's one we hadn't even thought of," Ettinger said.

## **Energy-saving work considered**

In other discussion at Tuesday's work session, Council learned that it could get terms of 3.5 percent over 10 years on energy-saving improvements.

Council on Sept. 7 approved a contract with Ennovate Corp. for nearly \$390,000 worth of upgrades and retrofits to city facilities, the majority of which would be work on the pool. The contract guarantees that the work will save more than \$33,000 in direct energy costs the first year; if the savings specified in the contract are not realized, Ennovate will make up the difference. The company estimates the projects will begin to pay for themselves after eight years.

Ennovate bid the contract with three lenders and found that the best rate was 3.5 percent over a 10-year term, Finance Director Mike Leslie told Council. That was less than the 5.5 percent over 12 years that had been anticipated.

Hearing that, Council members considered restoring improvement projects for City Hall, which they had cut from the contract because of a lengthy payback period.

Leslie was instructed to bring the contract plus a change order for the furnace project to the next Council meeting on Oct. 19 for further consideration.

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