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Saugerties Library sells expansion project

By Ariel Zangla , Freeman staff

SAUGERTIES - The proposed \$6.99 million renovation and expansion of the Saugerties Public Library will be the focus of a public meeting Monday and a referendum next month.

The project, if approved by voters, will add 8,365 square feet to the Washington Avenue library, bringing its total space to 13,100 feet. The expanded facility would be handicapped accessible, offer a new street-level entrance on the main floor, a public meeting room that can seat 90 people, an expanded media collection and a teen area with collection space and computer stations, among other

The project would be financed with a 25-year bond, costing the average library district property owner \$67 a year for a home as \$200,000.

"We're looking to bring this library into the future for this community," Library Director Jessica Serrano said. She said the project will renovate the existing building and expand the facilities while preserving the library's historical integrity.

Serrano said the expansion would help the library meet an increased demand for services, allow it to expand its collection of books, compact discs and DVDs and enable the library to have its summer reading program on site.

"This would just open up new doors for all the patrons and the community," she said.

Serrano said the library is working with the village to turn Division Street into a one-way street, which she said will allow for a lot of on-street parking for patrons.

An informational meeting on the proposed project, which will include a question-and-answer session with architect Paul Mays, is scheduled for 7 p.m. Monday at the Frank D. Greco Senior Center, Market and Robinson streets.

The referendum is scheduled for May 7 at the library. The polls will be open from noon to 9 p.m.

Serrano said the library board decided to hold the vote at the library only despite a request from Joseph Roberti, chairman of the Saugerties Republican Committee, to consider alternate polling places. She said three voting machines will be on site and volunteers will be available to pick up voters who need a ride to the polls.

The library will also be accepting absentee ballots, Serrano said. She said the library wants everyone to have an opportunity to vote on the proposed project.

In a press release, Roberti said he was concerned that limiting voting to one polling place would deter voters. He urged the library to consider establishing polling places at each of the four Saugerties elementary schools.

"Given the magnitude of this vote and the impact it will have on Saugerties property taxpayers, the Republican Committee believes the trustees should explore all avenues to increase voter turnout for this important election," Roberti said.

Serrano said the library trustees did consider Roberti's argument but ultimately decided that a vote about the library should take place at the library. She said the library's annual budget vote is also held there.