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Fruitport District Library is Outgrowing Its Current Facility

by Kate and Kim Holtrop

We sat down with Rose Dillon, Fruitport Library Board President, and with Karla Brown, President of the Friends of the Library, to find out about the discussion surrounding the Fruitport Library's needs, specifically the need for more space than the current building supplies.

Members of the Board and of the Friends have discussed the possibility that the current library building may not be suitable for the library anymore. The building has had some issues develop with occasional flooding in the basement and inadequate space for community activities and shelving and storage of books.

Both Karla and Rose agree that these issues are important to deal with. However, talks are still going on about what solutions are available. Several possibilities have been explored, including the now-vacant church on the corner of Pontaluna Road and Harvey Street, and the old doctor's offices adjacent to the library on Third Avenue, among other options. The possibility of tearing down the current library and building a larger facility on the current location is also being considered.

According to Karla, the church is an interesting prospect, with a nearly 8,000 square foot building and 2,000 square foot garage. The church has a

large sanctuary that can accommodate substantial shelving. It has a kitchen and community center as well. The 28-acre property, which includes the church and various out-buildings, would cost \$2.35 million. However, Rose informed us that the area also has a high water table, which would create the possibility of flooding.

Rose also talked about the doctor's office, which previously belonged to Dr. Robert Pierce, obstetrician-gynecologist. After having the building checked out by a construction company, she said that the board declined the office, chiefly because of its flat roof and few parking spaces. Karla said that the office would have cost between \$200,000 and \$300,000 to purchase the building, and approximately an additional \$700,000 to renovate the inside.

The option of rebuilding the current library has also been discussed. The new facility would need to be approximately 6,000 square feet, and would cost about \$420,000.

Our library offers lots of different things to the community. One of these is HOOPLA, a Cloud-based digital library service, where public library members can place holds on and check out movies, DVDs, eBooks, Audio Books, and many other things. The library offers classes for line dancing and yoga, hosts a book club for adults, and holds a Thanksgiving Walk and Christmas Candy Land Walk. Library staff also holds story

times and makes arts and crafts activities for children. The Friends of the Fruitport Library sell books in the Book Nook as well. According to Rose Dillon, 8,000 guests have visited the library building between January 2022 and October 2022, not including all those who have been benefited by the library's online services and programs.

The library would like to add more community interaction, which is one reason the board is looking for a bigger building. Their hopes include a meeting place for the Friends of the Library; a history room for residents to learn about their own history and that of the township; and a bigger community room for school kids and others to meet. More parking capacity and handicap accessibility are needed, as well as a solution for the basement's occasional flooding.

Our library is beneficial to our community, and those involved in operating it hope it can grow to be more so in the future by solving the current building's issues. But the Fruitport community needs to continue to be interested and involved in that process for those types of solutions to come together.

For Board Meeting times and minutes, community activities, and general information about the library, please visit the library's website: www.fruitportdistrictlibrary.org

Or go to: www.fruitportdistrictlibrary.org/about-us/library-board