

Cumberland to get new, larger library

The Board has awarded the Request for Proposal (RFP) to Steam Engine Estates to build a new, 2,865 sq. ft. library in Cumberland at 2727 Dunsmuir Avenue, across from the current branch. Last year, the Village of Cumberland requested VIRL to undertake a RFP process for a larger branch to be located in the downtown core on Dunsmuir Avenue and to be accessible by bicycle.

The present 840 sq. ft. Cumberland branch would have required extensive upgrades to bring it up to an acceptable level; however, it still would not meet the standards of a 21st Century library.

The proposed new library has been designed by architects Chow Low Hammond, who have extensive experience in library design. Construction is expected to start soon after Steam Engine Estates completes the permit application process with the Village of Cumberland.

New, larger library for Quadra Island

The Board has approved the lease agreement for a new, larger library facility for Quadra Island at the Cove Centre at Quathiaski Cove.

The Consolidated Facility Master Plan, commissioned in 2009 and approved by the Board in June 2010, established a new minimum target size of 2,750 sq. ft. and identified many deficiencies in VIRL's library branches, including Quadra Island. The consultants also established, and the Board endorsed, site selection criteria that were used when selecting sites for new library branches. The 20 point site selection criteria are as follows:

Physical Site: (1) Site accommodates facility which meets area standard for catchment area; (2) central to catchment area; (3) site is in future growth area; (4) high visibility within community; (5) close to commercial node/activity; (6) close to other community facilities; (7) site restrictions [i.e., flood plain or restrictive covenants]; (8) library use permitted by existing zoning.

Site Access: (9) Accessible by public transit; (10) vehicle parking is maximum permitted by zoning; (11) bicycle parking is provided [as per zoning if applicable]; (12) access for service and delivery vehicles.

Building: (13) Meets minimum area requirement (for branch size); (14) meets building code standards; (15) barrier free access; (16) access to telephone, Internet, cable, communication infrastructure; (17) overall premise/building is in good condition; (18) available for long term period [20 years]; (19) affordable; (20) separate entrance.

The current 1,024 sq. ft. branch has been at its present location at Heriot Bay since 1990, and the building lease expired on December 31, 2010. In January 2010 Strathcona Regional District requested that the Quadra Island library be included in VIRL's capital plan as the branch was deemed to be nearing the end of its useful life.

The new library will be more than double the size of the present branch and be in a prime location.

In the coming months, VIRL's architect will work with the Cove Centre landlord on space allocation and design. The library is slated to be operational in its new location in early 2012.

Building ownership vs. rent or lease

The Board has established the following preferences for library buildings: (1) VIRL owns the building through a process of borrowing by municipalities or regional districts; (2) rent or lease from public bodies (member jurisdictions); and (3) rent or lease from a private owner.

Impact of minimum wage legislation on VIRL

The Board received a report about the government's pending minimum wage increase and the implications for VIRL, which employs 20 FTE pages (ranging between 102 and 186 pages, annually) who are paid the minimum rate.

The current minimum wage of \$8 will increase to \$8.75 on May 1, to \$9.50 on November 1, and to \$10.25 on May 1, 2012. The increased rate represents a \$27,826 expenditure increase in 2011, and a \$76,522 increase in 2012. Board members spoke in support of the increase in minimum wage and plan to request additional funding from the Ministry to cover the increased expenditures.

Performance indicators

Board members received a first look at a new initiative of branch performance indicators comprising numbers of membership, visitors, reference consultations, circulation, Internet use, customer assistance, children's literacy stations, database usage, number of programs offered, and attendance at programs.

The initiative, which was well received by Trustees, will be further refined in the coming months.

Horizon upgrade requires closure of 5 branches

The automated system that supports VIRL's operations will be upgraded over the Victoria Day weekend. This will require closure on May 22 of five branches (Harbourfront, Cowichan, Sidney, Parksville, Courtenay), in addition to the statutory holiday closure on May 23. Staff regularly scheduled to work that day will not lose any pay. During the system upgrade the following functions will be inoperable: catalogue, check-in/out, email, telephone notification, public computing and wireless access.

Branch activities report

The Board received a report on activities and programs offered at various library branches. The report received a round of applause and many accolades from Trustees, who wish to "Thank staff for a job well done".

Neighbourhood Learning Centres

Rod Allen, Superintendent of Student Achievement, Ministry of Education, gave a guest presentation on the Ministry's new initiative of Neighbourhood Learning Centres and the role that libraries could play in the government's initiative. He used Port Clements as an example of a successful Neighbourhood Learning Centre. Board members expressed the need for adequate provincial funding to participate in initiatives such as these.

2011 Board Meeting Dates

June 11

September 24

November 26