

Plan for new library faces further consultations

By Greg MacCormack

The board of the Ottawa Public Library hopes its consultations on a new central library will convince the city to put money aside for the project, says Coun. Diane Deans, a member of the library board.

Consultations on the new building are expected to begin by June and Deans says the city is likely to start setting aside money for a new main library as early as next year.

However, the board does not have a plan on how to pay for the new building, Deans says, adding that it would be unwise to raise expectations prematurely.

The library board's consultations are important because the city was unprepared when a developer, DCR Phoenix, approached the city with a proposal to build the library in a partnership with the city, said Coun. Rick Chiarelli, chair of the library board, at a library board meeting last month.

That plan was halted when city manager Kent Kirkpatrick wrote in a memo to council that the city could build the library itself for the cost of the DCR project, estimated at \$150 million. At the same time, however, the memo suggested that the city

couldn't afford it.

Deans says she does not know how long it could be before a new library is built.

It is hoped that the consultations will provide the city with the public's expectations for a new central library.

Coun. Diane Holmes says the city needs to discuss where it will get funding for the new building.

The board needs to know what they need in a site for the new library, she says, and the proposed DCR Phoenix location, near the Bayview transit station, was too far west.

The new location should be accessible to workers in the downtown core during their lunch break, Holmes says. She also suggests the library board investigate whether the federal or provincial governments would be interested in a land swap with the city.

Karyn Standen, the new vice-chair of the Ottawa Public Library Board, says the board will reach the most people possible for input.

Chiarelli says the new library would have a million visitors a year and this is attractive to a private partner because of its market place value.

"I don't think we are going to build a new library without a pri-

vate sector partner," he says.

Holmes says Chiarelli, as chair of the library board, should talk to the mayor and Kirkpatrick. She says the city and the library board should identify two or three possible sites — a year's work — and only then should the city discuss the possibility of a public-private partnership.

The library board held consultations six months ago that recommended the construction of a "cultural gateway," which in addition to a new library, would house sports facilities and other city services, Deans says.

She questions whether that consultation came to a realistic goal. "We need to give it more thought," she says, to come up with a workable plan.

Chiarelli agrees, saying the cultural gateway proposal was an "outrageously expensive option" that called for a 31,500 square-metre building at a cost of \$350 million.

Deans says a new building is needed.

The current main library, at Metcalfe Street and Laurier Avenue, is 8,100 square meters and is designed to service a population of a quarter million. Ottawa's population is estimated at 800,000 and Deans says it is expected to grow to 1.2 million in 20 years.

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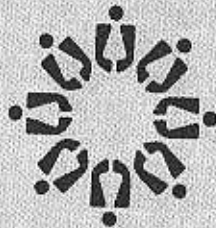
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Standen says the consultation process could take some time. The board will attempt to ensure that any future work is done in collaboration with the city's long-range financial plan committee to account for funding, she says.

Yves Potvin, a resident who attended the Ottawa Public Library Board meeting, says the council needs to plan for the long-term when designing the new building, adding that it should be within easy walking distance of the Rideau Centre and built on a lot the size of a city block.

He suggests the new building should be 36,000 square metres and situated on an oversized lot for any future expansion. He predicts that in 30 years the new library building will need to expand to double its original size, then lasting for another 30 to 40 years.

Pamela Sweet was recently made the chair of the New Central Library Building Committee, a subcommittee of the Ottawa Public Library Board. She says the library board hopes to add the new main library to the city's list of long-term plans, but admits it will be difficult.