

Weymouth library design has community appeal

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Construction of the library is expected to get underway this spring after the current facility is demolished, according to Mary Mahoney, a Hill International Project manager. The new building is expected to be completed in June 2020.

A new \$33 million Tufts Library design has more meeting rooms to host community groups and an enlarged historical artifacts section for patrons to learn about Weymouth's history since the town's founding in 1622.

The historical room will contain a 654-year-old Native American dugout canoe that was discovered submerged in the shoreline of Great Pond by several youths in November 1965, and the boat is currently displayed at Tufts in a basement room.

"There will be six small rooms for groups of four to eight people on the second floor with two more of these rooms downstairs for a total of eight meeting rooms," said Chris Blessen, a principal architect with Tappe Architects, during a public forum last Thursday.

The largest meeting room can accommodate up to 175 guests, according to the design, which includes a divider to shutter the remaining portion of the library from being accessed if a gathering continues beyond closing hours.

"We will have a quiet reading room," Blessen said. "The library will be a community center and at the top of the stairs you will have periodicals and some more popular materials."

He said the dugout canoe would be displayed prominently in the planned local history room.

“We will have artifacts and a protected archives area,” Blessen said. “The library will have a better state for protecting local history content and that will be better than having it sitting on shelves. Over time, the local history content could be digitalized. We will try to make the local history more alive and accessible.”

Weymouth Public Libraries Director Robert MacLean said the new larger history room will be complimented with displays of historic paintings and sculptures in the building.

“A lot of the art we have connects with Weymouth residents and artists,” he said. “It will be fantastic.”

MacLean said visitors will have a café on the first floor to enjoy a cup of coffee from a self-serve service station.

“We are not going to have a Dunkin Donuts or a Starbucks,” he said. “The café space will have tables and chairs.”

Visitors will also enjoy a wide view of Weston Park from the café and on a second floor overlook, where they can see a planned children’s play area, picnic tables and an amphitheater.

“There will be a view of the sledding hill,” Blessen said.

He said the building is being designed to be compatible with the neighborhood.

“We will have a civic like entrance on the front of the building,” Blessen said.

He said the rear entrance of the library near Weston Park, with its stone brick facade, would look less formal.

The design also includes a teen room that is twice the size of the current space at Tufts.

“It will be fun and uniquely geared for them,” Blessen said. “It will be a place where teens can be themselves.”

Tappe Architect Jeffrey Hoover said the new library would be a place where parents can find resources with how to raise their children.

“That is what I see happening in the context of this plan,” he said.

The design includes a new reading and program room for children up to age 12 that is twice the size of the current young people’s section.

“There will be an early childhood learning area,” he said. “We want this experience to be suited for parents and caregivers.”

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The new building is expected to be completed in June 2020.

Pierce Road resident Tanya Tarnawski said she is excited about the anticipated opening of the new library and would like it to have energy saving measures.

“Could you comment on plans for LED (lighting) certification and how you will incorporate the environment into the design?” she asked.

Blessen said the new building would have triple glazing on the windows and LED lighting throughout the facility.

“A lot of the windows will have automated shades if it is too sunny,” he said. “The building has the ability to be solar ready. It is able to house solar panels with a connection that goes down from the roof to the electrical room.”

Mahoney said the mechanical room in the new library would be highly efficient with regulating the flow of heat and air conditioning throughout the building.

“It will be up to the library director to run the system,” she said. “It will be user friendly so people in the building know how to use it. It will have LED lighting and controls so that we don’t light up the library like a Christmas tree seven days a week.”

Mayor Robert Hedlund said a lot of support went into securing a \$12 million grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners last year to develop construction plans.

“I want to thank the all our committee members and the town council,” he said. “We began planning for this in February of 2016 after taking office. We were brought up to speed on our (town) capital needs. There were a lot of issues facing the library.”

Hedlund said his administration opted to seek funds for a new library upon learning the current facility needed a new roof, an updated heating and ventilation system, asbestos removal and increased space.

“I knew we were talking millions of dollars,” he said. “During my time in the legislature, Weymouth had never sought a library construction grant. We looked to apply for a library construction grant and we had a limited window to pursue this project. The consensus for the staff was it made sense to do that and we hastily assembled a construction committee.”