



Library at 200 Main street Vineyard Haven has seen more than one expansion over the years. *Ray Ewing*

Vineyard Haven Library Plans Expansion

Holly Pretsky *Wednesday, January 9, 2019 - 3:52pm*

As programs have grown more frequent and attendance has soared, the Vineyard Haven library is gearing up for a small expansion in the form of a new program room.

The project, whose cost is estimated at about \$1 million, will be paid for with mostly private funds.

The designer for the project is Maryann Thompson, whose architecture firm has done other projects on the Vineyard, including the visitor center at the Polly Hill Arboretum. “She’s also a landscape architect, which we knew was an important part of what the community wanted out of this project, a well-designed exterior,” library director Amy Ryan said.

The plan calls for the addition to be completed by 2020.



Library trustees plan to raise private funds to cover the \$1 million expansion project. — *Ray Ewing*

The planning process for the new program room is still in its early stages. A community meeting is planned for Jan. 24 at 6 p.m. in the library to allow members of the public to participate in developing a wish list and character study.

According to library data, the number of programs for adults and young adults has doubled since 2008, and attendance has nearly quadrupled since then. “Our programming and participation for adults has really exploded,” Ms. Ryan said.

On a recent afternoon in the library basement, the existing programming room was full of kids, noise and glitter as the build club put together glow-in-the-dark crafts.

The room is about 600 square feet.

“The ceilings are less than eight feet,” Ms. Ryan said. “That makes it hard to project movies.” She pointed to areas where ductwork made the ceiling even lower. A staircase at the far end of the room leads up to the children’s section of the library.

The room comfortably seats 45 people, Ms. Ryan said. More than a third of programs at the library since last fall have had higher attendance than that. The new room is expected to be between 1,200 and 1,500 square feet and have the capacity to accommodate 100 to 125 people. It will house lectures, film screenings and public meetings among other events.

Also the room’s location in the basement of the building requires the entire library to be open in order to reach it. The new space will be accessible from an outside entrance, Ms. Ryan said.

Ms. Ryan said the most likely place for the addition is the courtyard space that abuts the first-floor reading room. The courtyard was once home to a small Shakespeare garden and statue that was donated to the town some years ago. The statue remains and will be preserved, but the garden was removed some time ago, Ms. Ryan said.



“When they did a renovation in 2000, they basically had to obliterate the landscaping,” Ms. Ryan said. “We are sensitive about the garden issue, but we have this demonstrated need.”

She said the building committee is aware that some library-goers will miss the courtyard, but she said it is rarely used by more than one or two people at a time, and the designers will be intentional about landscaping around the building.

“I think there are a lot of ways to make the space attractive,” she said.

The library has been located on Main street Vineyard Haven since 1909. The existing building was completed in 1967 and renovated in 2000.

Library trustees plan to launch a capital fundraising drive to pay for the project. The town appropriated \$40,000 for design work at last year’s town meeting. But with a major school renovation and a new town hall on the horizon, Ms. Ryan said the library will not return to the town for the remaining required funds. Instead funding will come from the library’s trust fund and private donations.

“We are cognizant that the town has a lot of other projects,” Ms. Ryan said.

Meanwhile, the library will continue to host an average of 36 programs per month, ranging from kids' cooking classes to lectures to movie screenings. They'll also continue to host meetings for other groups from the Girl Scouts to the Chamber of Commerce.

"Things have changed, and we want a building that can keep up with that," Ms. Ryan said.

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