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Lindenhurst residents worry about cost of library overhaul

July 16, 2017 By Denise M. Bonilla denise.bonilla@newsday.com



Assistant director Lisa Kropp says the Lindenhurst Memorial Library, built in 1969, needs to be brought into the 21st century. (Credit: Johnny Milano)

Residents attending the first public meeting on a proposed \$16 million renovation of Lindenhurst Memorial Library agreed the facility needs an overhaul, but some questioned what they said is a hefty price tag.

Under the proposed plan, discussed at the meeting Thursday, the 22,000-square-foot library would gain nearly 10,000 square feet of

space. Among the improvements would be more meeting rooms, a "creation space" with 3-D printers and die-cut machines, and handicapped-accessible bathrooms.

The work would be funded through a bond the library would put before voters, possibly as soon as November.

Library officials said the renovation is sorely needed, as they are unable to provide the services or space that the nearly 27,000 active library card holders require. The library, built in 1969, needs to be brought into the 21st century, said Lisa Kropp, the library's assistant director.

But some residents balked at the cost.

"We all agree the library needs a face-lift," civic leader John Lisi told library officials. "But the enormity of the \$16 million expense will be a huge burden to the property taxpayers."

The 15-year bond is estimated to cost homeowners \$3.309 per \$100 of assessed valuation, so the average home assessed at \$3,000 will pay an additional \$99 a year in taxes, library officials said.

Kropp said the library is "aware of the hardships" of the community post-superstorm Sandy and stressed that the price tag is not final and the library will seek aid and look at fundraising to offset costs.

The library is paying architects H2M of Melville \$35,000, of which half is refundable should a bond resolution pass.

A request for queries was sent to nine architects, Kropp said, and five responded. Kropp said the library did not provide a budget to any of the architects because it was "too limiting," and none of the other firms submitted projected costs for their renovations.

Joe Mottola of H2M broke down the \$15.9 million cost: \$11.8 million for hard costs, such as construction and materials; \$2.1 million for contingency costs; and \$2 million for soft costs, like environmental reports and site surveys. But some residents said they wanted a more detailed breakdown of line items, which Mottola said his firm would provide.

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Lindenhurst school board member Valerie McKenna pointed to her district's past experience with putting multimillion-dollar bonds before voters and predicted the library's effort would not be successful.

"I think that this will not pass," McKenna said, noting that the district had received pushback on a \$25 million proposed bond and reduced it to \$8.8 million in 2014. "You've got to come in a lot lower."

But some said the costs of the renovation were minimal compared to the long-term benefits.

"Lindenhurst needs this," resident Harry Kalogeresis said. "These facilities are obsolete . . . We cannot lose focus that this is an investment in our community."

The next meeting on the renovation will be held July 29.

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