

LONG ISLAND / SUFFOLK**Lindenhurst library bond defeat prompts consideration of Plan B**

Administrators plan to “re-engage” residents on \$14.5M measure, but opponents say public’s concerns over cost of project were disregarded.



A proposed \$14.5 million bond measure would have added nearly 10,000 square feet to the Lindenhurst Memorial Library, which was built in 1969 and serves 42,000 residents. Photo Credit: Johnny Milano

By Denise M. Bonilla

denise.bonilla@newsday.com  @denisebonilla

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Lindenhurst Memorial Library administrators want to engage with more members of the community after a bond measure for a wide-scale renovation was voted down.

The library was seeking \$14.5 million in bonding to be used to fund an overhaul of the Lee Avenue building. The measure, put to the public last week, failed by a vote of 683-521.

“Myself, the administration and the board are obviously disappointed in the outcome,” said the library’s assistant director, Lisa Kropp. “We look forward to actively re-engaging the community members after the holidays.”

Kropp declined to say whether the measure would be put up for another vote.

The library, built in 1969, serves 42,000 residents with nearly 27,000 active library cards, Kropp said.

The planned renovations would have added nearly 10,000 square feet to the facility and would have

adding meeting space and creating quiet study rooms.

Library administrators at first proposed a \$16 million bond but that was met with resistance by the community, so the amount was lowered and officials offered up \$500,000 from the library's coffers. The \$14.5 million bond proposal would have resulted in an annual tax increase of \$2.80 per \$100 of assessed value, or \$98.41 for an average home assessed at \$3,500.

Kropp said the library hopes to "work with community members to help us gain their insight and perspective on what perhaps would be more positively received."

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Civic leader John Lisi said residents' feelings were made clear at public meetings during the summer on the renovation plans. He said he and others "tried to provide the input that this total dollar amount would not be received well by the community and that the estimate of \$14.5 million was overinflated." But, he said, "that input was apparently not accepted by the library."

Kropp said that the meetings averaged only about 25 people and that moving forward "we want to make sure we have representation from more of the community," thereby engaging more residents so that they can "spread information wider."

Resident Harry Kalogeresis, who was a proponent of the bonding, blamed the measure's failure on a "misinformation campaign" on social media and lack of support among those considered community leaders.

"They don't see the value of having an updated library," he said. "I don't think they see how it benefits the community economically."

Lisi said residents are not against updating the library but that the proposal made was "not in line with the community's ability to provide, given the current total tax level" and with many still trying to recover from superstorm Sandy.

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