


SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Libraries and Historical Resources

TO: Sarasota County Commission
THROUGH: Thomas A. Harmer, County Administrator 
FROM: Sarabeth Kalajian, Director, Libraries and Historical Resources
DATE: March 22, 2017
SUBJECT: Venice Library Update – Board Priority

This is the twelfth in a series of updates on the Venice Library project to the Board of County Commissioners (Board). At this time, the report is presented on the following topics:

- A. Operation of the Temporary Library Service;
- B. Planning For a New Library;
- C. Communication and Public Outreach

A. Operation of the Temporary Library Service:

The temporary Venice Library operates Monday through Saturday, including three evenings per week. Since opening in October, 2016, more than 53,000 library visits have been recorded, for an average of 10,600 visits per month.

Increased seasonal programming includes concerts, lectures and the popular Great Decisions series, held at the Venice Community Center. Youth activities, such as weekly storytimes and a gardening program are hosted at the library.

B. Planning For a New Library:

On December 5, 2016, staff representatives from Sarasota County, the City of Venice, and Sweet Sparkman Architects met with Venice Cultural Campus organization representatives to review proposed site plans and site improvements associated with the new Venice Library. The proposed changes were discussed and considered by attendees to be positive enhancements to the Campus.

Two Library Update meetings were conducted at the Venice Community Center on Thursday, December 8, 2016 at 10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Todd Sweet of Sweet Sparkman Architects presented images of the potential sites considered for the library, including the recommended site, which is adjacent to the intersection of Nokomis and Milan Avenues at the northeast corner of the Campus. Mr. Sweet also presented a preliminary floor plan designating the major service areas and referenced how the design was influenced by feedback from the six previous Community Planning Workshops and the thirteen Focus Group sessions. Mr. Sweet then introduced examples of building features representing the Northern Italian Renaissance architectural style. These features will be considered as the library exterior is designed.

The presentation concluded with a review of the project timeline. Project team members then answered questions and recorded feedback as attendees visited displays of the draft floor plans and site improvements. Approximately 130 people attended the sessions.

On December 17, 2016 Sweet Sparkman Architects submitted the proposed library site plan and improvements to the City of Venice Technical Review Committee. Initial feedback included comments that the proposed site plan would increase access to parking and improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

Architect John Bryant presented project information to the Friends of the Venice Library on February 8, 2017. Mr. Sweet presented a summary of the project plans to members of the Library Advisory Board on February 22, 2017.

On February 15, 2017, the Board of County Commissioners approved an amended project budget and approved the amended contract to Ajax/Tandem Construction, to advance the schedule for the library building demolition.

The City of Venice issued a permit for the building demolition on March 16, 2017. Demolition began March 20, 2017. Following demolition, additional geotechnical testing will be conducted. The completion of Construction Documents is scheduled for summer, 2017, to be followed by the Bidding and Permitting Phase. Construction is scheduled to begin in the fall, with completion anticipated in late 2018.

C. Communication and Public Outreach:

The December 8, 2017 Library Update presentation and summary of attendee feedback was sent to 400+ citizens via the eMail distribution list and was posted to the project update page on the County website.

A YouTube feature about the Library Update meeting is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zw89iTYO--4&feature=youtu.be>

A three-part County Talk segment on the Library project is posted to the Venice Update section of the County website.

Library staff visited residents and business owners and tenants along Milan and Nokomis Avenues to provide information about the demolition schedule. A fact sheet and contact information was mailed to each residential and business address and is displayed on the County website. Staff continues to respond as citizens submit questions and comments via phone calls and email messages to the AskLibraries@scgov.net site.

On Tuesday, March 14, 2017, County staff provided a brief summary about the demolition schedule to the Venice City Council.

The City previously identified Assistant City Manager Len Bramble as their primary point of contact with whom there has been on-going collaboration and discussions. Mr. Bramble participates in public planning sessions and meetings with the Cultural Campus representatives, as well as in discussions with the library project team. County staff will continue to communicate with the City as the Venice Library project proceeds. Periodic written updates will continue to be provided to the Board, shared with City Administration, and posted to the County website.