

# Library and NPRD continue to explore joint venture

By REGAN TUTTLE

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The possibility of the Library District partnering with the Park and Rec District grows stronger in Norwood.

All area residents were invited to attend a public meeting last Tuesday at the Norwood Community Center facilitated by library consultant Jamie LaRue.

There, sub-committee groups from the library, NPRD and the Town of Norwood gathered to share their visions for the potential joint venture.

“Small towns benefit when groups get together to meet community needs,” library director Carrie Andrew said. “There is a great deal of potential here for a project that can help advance the missions of many different groups. We wanted to explore those possibilities in the planning phase.”

NPL and NPRD began the exploration process in May.

According to Andrew, the library has outgrown its current space.

“In 2009, the library saw 818 visitors, and last year that number jumped 2,896,” she said. “We have realized it’s time to start looking at a new library.”

NPRD board member Karen Bellerose said Park and Rec needs an official space to accommodate its administration and has been asked for a multi-use space by community members.

“The rec district needs space. User groups have come to us because they want to bring projects like Zumba or disc golf,” she said. “We are exploring with the library ‘what common needs do we have?’ Like a place for soccer, a community walking trail or a program room for weddings or special events.”

According to chamber president Rebecca Rogers, the Norwood Chamber of Commerce is also interested in the possible joint venture.

Both NPRD and the chamber are interested in the possibility of a campground.

LaRue recently conducted interviews in Norwood and discovered that the public’s top needs are public space and space for activities and social events.

Because of the public’s consensus, LaRue said it is wise not to duplicate construction in Norwood.

“Pay for it once, and share,” he said.

LaRue said he believes Norwood citizens currently have a desire to see something positive happen in the community.

“We are in between impasse and catalyst,” he said. “And it takes two groups to make a catalyst.”

While the library has pledged its commitment to the joint venture, NPRD is currently still dedicated to the exploration process.

Now, though, money becomes the focus as Andrew looks at grant funding through DOLA for cost estimates involved in planning.

“We are moving from feasibility to cost estimate,” LaRue said.

In the future, public design meetings could take place with additional exploration of ideas.

“Those would formalize requirements,” LaRue said. “How many square feet would we need? How big does this space or this office need to be?”

Floor plans and future phases would also be addressed in upcoming meetings.

Now, LaRue said, is the time for compatible use partnerships to be examined further. With the library district’s 12 acres, other possibilities may exist that could help finance the project.

LaRue estimates that 70-80 percent of the joint venture would utilize government sources. The rest would come from fundraising and grants.

The project would likely include green build design, as it is not only cost effective, but exemplary.

LaRue stressed the importance of quality and pride should the construction come to fruition.

“The most important thing about your community is who you draw to it,” he said.