

FINAL REPORT

SITE EVALUATIONS/SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

POSSIBLE FUTURE LOCATIONS FOR A DISTRICT LIBRARY

Prepared for: DeWitt Public Library Board

Prepared and Submitted by: Ad Hoc Site Selection Committee

Committee Members:

Matthew Kulhanek

Diane Mosier

Gregg Ostrander

Rene Prado

Ken Ross

Wayne Summers

September 2006

I. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

The DeWitt Public Library Board determined that the mission of the Site Selection/Evaluation Committee should be:

- to complete an inventory of available sites for possible location of a new District Library
- to narrow the inventory to the best sites for the possible placement of a future new District Library
- to present the Committee's findings to the Library Board at a date to be determined

The following resource information was provided to the Committee: Timeline of DeWitt Public Library Facility Needs; Board of Trustees Work Session Meeting Notes from the Breton Group; Letter from Vlahakis Commercial regarding the Library's inability to expand at their existing site; outline of information about site selection considerations relating to public libraries.

Library Board Chairman Wayne Summers determined the makeup of the Committee to be:

Matthew Kulhanek, DeWitt Township Manager and resident of DeWitt Township

Diane Mosier, DeWitt Township Clerk, Library Board Member, and resident of DeWitt Township

Rene Prado, Director of DeWitt Public Library and resident of the City of DeWitt

Gregg Ostrander, Library Board Member and resident of the City of DeWitt

Ken Ross, DeWitt City Council Member and resident of the City of DeWitt

Wayne Summers, President of the DeWitt Library Board and resident of DeWitt Township

II. EVALUATION PROCESS

The Committee began meeting in early March of 2006 at the DeWitt Township Hall. Noteworthy facts discussed early in the process:

- a) The Library Board has conducted a Workshop, lead by the Breton Group, to begin discussion relative to the library's future needs.
- b) The Library Board is in the process of commissioning a Needs Assessment, and the process to complete this assessment will likely be ongoing concurrently with the Site Selection Committee's evaluation. In order to begin the work the Committee has been assigned, it was determined that the Committee needed some specific information. The following assumptions were generated by the Library Board members of the Site Selection/Evaluation Committee with the knowledge that detailed information will be more accurately determined by the findings of the Needs Assessment.

Site Assumptions:

- a) any new facility will likely be in excess of 20,000 square feet
- b) any new facility should have sufficient land for future growth or expansion
- c) a proposed site should be a minimum of 3 usable acres, preferably 5 acres in size

Inventory Area:

In determining the area to be inventoried, the Committee felt that any future site should be in the general area of the current library facility, since the success experienced at the existing library may be jeopardized with drastic change. Determining the boundaries of the area to be inventoried was of great importance to the committee, since the site must, at the very least, conveniently serve residents within the District. The Library District, which is defined here by the area of residents currently paying Library millage, includes three government units.

A map of the inventory area is attached and described below. Properties inventoried were within Sections 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, and 18 of the County of Clinton. These sections include all of the City of DeWitt (DC), portions of DeWitt Township (DT) and portions of Watertown Township (WT).

- North Boundary: a line extended both east and west of the north boundary of the City of DeWitt
- West Boundary: Airport Road, however, some properties west of Airport Road in the Watertown Township portion of the Library District were discussed
- East Boundary: Business 27
- South Boundary: Clark Road

Initial Sites Investigated:

City of DeWitt, DeWitt Township, and Watertown Township staff were the Committee's primary source of information. Only vacant lands were inventoried and the combination of parcels was not considered, unless obvious. The Library Board members of the Site Selection/Evaluation Committee also felt that ownership of the Library is the best long term solution for the community, thus rental property or buildings were not considered.

Both public and privately owned parcels were inventoried. From the inventory initially investigated, eight properties were listed as warranting further evaluation. Each site was visited by the Committee prior to further evaluation.

It is noted that the properties are described, since vacant properties have rarely been assigned an address.

- Parson's Property – Herbison Road east of the Township Hall
- Sibley Property-located in both DC & DT between Dill and Webb Roads
- Property south of the DeWitt Post Office
- Farnum Property – west side of DeWitt Road north of the I-69 interchange
- Clark Property – Clark Road west of Redeemer Church
- Hawthorne Woods Property – west side of Schavey Road across from Schavey School
- Padgett Park – south side of Herbison Road west of Schavey east of SCCMUA
- DeWitt School Property – internal Herbison Road complex & DeWitt Road north of interchange

Evaluation of the Properties

The process used to evaluate properties was specific and detailed. It was the desire of the Committee to utilize a rating system that could not be considered arbitrary.

The Criteria:

Location of Property - proximity to schools, accessibility to users, the Library District, the Library service area, demographic pattern, neighborhood compatibility

Site Expansion Potential – usability of property, site capacity

Accessibility and Walkability – easily accessible by automobile and within walking distance of some users

Visibility – prominent location, visible along a major street

Cost – using whatever information could be compiled, privately or publicly owned

Utilities – availability and particulars for connection and use

Physiography – suitability of soils, topography of the site, orientation relating to sun, wind, etc.

Legal Issues – existence of easements, zoning restrictions, ingress/egress issues

Aesthetics – pleasing location

Public Acceptance – is the property in a location that will be accepted by the community and the voters who might determine a millage question, since public acceptance will affect fundraising

With the criteria established, each Committee member rated each criterion, to determine its value or importance. Those numbers were then compiled and the priority of each criterion was established. An associated score for rating properties was established and shown below.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| 1. Location | 19 points |
| 2. Public Acceptance | 14 points |
| 3. Walkability | 14 points |
| 4. Cost | 14 points |
| 5. Visibility | 9 points |
| 6. Expansion | 9 points |
| 7. Site Aesthetics | 9 points |
| 8. Physiography | 4 points |
| 9. Legal | 4 points |
| 10. Utilities | 4 points |

Total Possible 100 points

From the above, each property was rated by each Committee member. It was not the mission of the Committee to select three properties, but to find the point where properties were considered substantially superior based on the system used.

III. PROPERTIES SELECTED FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Three properties were clearly rated higher than others.

- Property south of the DeWitt Post Office
- Padgett Park – on the south side of Herbison east of SCCMUA
- Hawthorne Woods property-west of Schavey across from Schavey School

The Committee did not attempt to rank these three properties. Further investigation of each of these properties was done, and that information is provided here to assist the Library Board in their further assessment. A summary of the information on each property is provided within this report.

Property South of the DeWitt Post Office

This site is in close proximity (immediately south) to a site the Library previously considered for a new facility. The entire parcel is approximately 8 acres and the property immediately to the south is currently being developed as an expansion of the Oaks Subdivision.

Wayne Summers was the Committee member who investigated particulars of this property and met with the property owner. For reasons that appear obvious, the Committee has chosen to not put to paper specific information about the value of the property. Information regarding value will be stated in generalities, and can be discussed by the Library Board with Summers. The Committee believes that the Library Board is very familiar with this parcel. This property was considered to be very desirable.

Perceived Advantages: location, visibility, public acceptance, walkability, aesthetics, expansion potential

Perceived Disadvantages: cost, distance is further from Watertown portion of District and further north of the central part of the Library District, distance from schools

Hawthorne Woods Property

This site is across from the Schavey Road School, with frontage on Schavey. The parcel is approximately 3.78 acres, however, approximately 3 acres are usable, since some part is possible wetland. The property is adjacent to an existing pond within the Hawthorne Woods Site Condominiums Project which is a Planned Unit Development with private roads. The owner of the property, Bob Harr, has planned this property as a future expansion of the existing development, and has received preliminary approvals for the same. Harr was open to discussing the property with Committee member Matthew Kulhanek and an approximate value was established. Harr indicated that time may be an issue, since he has somewhat immediate plans to proceed with development of the property. He also expressed some interest in the Library's existing site.

Perceived Advantages: location (approximately one city block south of existing library), visibility, availability of utilities on the property frontage, walkability, aesthetics, public acceptance, proximity to schools

Perceived Disadvantages: cost, possible wetland portions limiting future expansion potential, immediate use of property is planned

Padgett Park Property – south side of Herbison Road just east of SCCMUA

This property is part of the Padgett Park Natural Area and is publicly owned. The property considered is north of the restroom facility on the park site, with several topographic particulars that could be considered both advantages and disadvantages. The property is heavily treed, has a rather large ravine on approximately one half of the frontage, and would require design specifically suitable to the site. Initially, the Committee felt that soil borings would need to be done, however, the DeWitt Township Engineer did an initial investigation of the elevations and soils, and determined that the site is certainly usable with sufficient high elevations for construction. Committee member Diane Mosier compiled information regarding the property and is the most familiar with its unique challenges. The Committee concurred that this site has a significant level of potential uncertainty, and soil boring would be essential in determining site quality.

Perceived Advantages: cost (publicly owned), location adjacent to dedicated natural area, the unique natural character of the site, close proximity to schools, sewer readily available, location relative to the District

Perceived Disadvantages: the topography of the property presents challenges, visibility would require clearing, water is available with some cost for extension, public acceptance-since the property is the frontage to a dedicated natural area, walkability would require some improvement

Additional Noteworthy Property

Farnum Property – west side DeWitt Road north of the I-69 interchange

Library Director Prado has participated in discussions with Norm Farnum, the owner of this property, who has indicated an interest in donating approximately 5 acres of property for a future Library site. The exact location of the five acres Mr. Farnum is considering is still in question, since he owns a large parcel at this location. This property was among the Committee's final eight properties investigated and rated.

The property rated high, based on location, however, was rated lower because of walkability, cost, and the possibility of utility issues. This does not mean that these issues cannot be resolved. For these reasons, the Committee is recommending that this property be included with the other three properties considered viable.

IV. CLOSING COMMENTS

When considering this Final Report, the Committee expressed a desire to make the following comments to the Library Board:

- Each of the final four properties described possesses its own advantages, challenges, and unique characteristics or obstacles. Although obstacles can often be overcome, the associated costs can often be a determining factor in selecting a property. The Committee did not extend its efforts to research these issues, determining only to bring to light the possibility that an issue may exist.
- Extensive investigation of the properties will need to be done by the Library Board. The Committee did not feel it possessed the authority to continue further investigation on the Library's behalf.
- In further investigation of the properties, before a preferred site is determined, the Library Board may want to develop a plan for input by local government agencies, local leaders, or even the public, to assist the Board in their decision making process.