

Many emotionally attached to library, meeting hears

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Bruce Street building, regardless of its future use. The Pine Street building, which currently houses the library's administration office would cost between \$160,000 and \$240,000 in renovations, and as Langlois pointed out, "there is no allocation in the Town's future capital budget for this."

Maintenance and repair costs for the two buildings over the next five years is estimated at \$580,000. Beyond that time, he said about \$65,000 should be budgeted each year to maintain the buildings.

"If you only had X amount (of money),

what are we spending it on?" Langlois asked the crowd. "It's great you want the library to stay, but what type of library do you want? If library services are offered, then what does that look like?"

When the new arts centre opens in spring 2011, the main library, housed in a 16,000 square-foot space, is to move to a new, 30,000 square-foot building, which is about 1.5 km from the current library.

"Certainly keeping all 16,000 square-feet (at Bruce Street) would be a significant challenge and a bit over the top," said Langlois.

One of the options suggested was keeping

a 6,000 square-foot branch library at the current location with reduced hours and services.

Another option was a smaller reading room or book nook operated by a third party.

Since all the material and equipment at the Bruce Street library is moving to the new library, it would cost about \$1.35 million to outfit a branch library and \$605,000 a year to operate, on top of the renovation costs. Langlois said the book nook option would cost the Town a minimal amount to operate.

Other options explored included using the building for youth services, seniors' services, social services or child care.

Jeff Bergsma, representing the Milton Christian School, said the school was interested in the Bruce Street building to operate a day care.

He said the school would be willing to consider also operating a book nook or nursery school from the building.

"We want to integrate seniors into our programs so they can interact with students. They both have some wisdom to share," he said, eliciting chuckles from the audience.

A representative from Our Kids Network spoke to the audience about a need for space for youth in Milton.

"Not only is the senior population growing, the child population is booming. A lot of kids in Milton are not athletes. A lot of kids are not into the arts. So they need a space where they can come interact with the new youth that come into Milton," said Vanessa Box-Jones.

However, the response from the audience was pretty well unanimous — they want the library to stay.

An audience member said the consultants were eager to talk about financials, but not about the emotional attachment toward the library. "If you lost that facility in the centre of town, the town loses something as well."

During his presentation, Langlois acknowledged the residents of 'old' Milton are feeling left behind.

Ward 2 Councillor Greg Nelson agreed.

He said he would like to see a smaller branch library operate from the Bruce Street location, adding the numbers presented at the meeting were the "worst case scenario."

"As far as hard numbers are concerned, they still need to be crunched by finance and community services and the library board."

The majority of those in attendance seemed to approve of the creation of a branch library.

"We don't need a full-service library. We don't need an enormous bank of computers," said one woman. "What we need is our books and a place to go and talk to other people interested in books. We just need our library downtown."

The Town is soliciting ideas from residents on the future use of 45 Bruce St. and 407 Pine St. Ideas can be emailed until January 30. Email Jennifer Reynolds, director of community services, at jennifer.reynolds@milton.ca.

Christina Commisso can be reached at ccommisso@miltoncanadianchampion.com.



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