

Huntley Area Public Library eyes expansion

Executive director hopes to put referendum to voters by 2020

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HUNTLEY – Huntley Area Public Library’s executive director said residents can have more people around their Thanksgiving dining table than kids allowed in the library’s children’s area.

The library’s building opened in 1999 – before the village’s population boom with Sun City and Talamore subdivision development – and it has yet to expand, library Executive Director Frank Novak said.

The children’s area’s maximum capacity is 12 people.

“Honestly, it’s absurd,” Novak said. “You get one large family here, and you’re done.”

Novak said he is working with the library’s board to create a building proposal to construct a 15,000-square-foot addition.

“We are still discussing this with the board and will be taking this to the public possibly in the spring of 2019,” Novak said.

At the very latest, Novak hopes to have a referendum on the ballot by the presidential election in 2020 because the trailers the library is using for extra space will not last beyond 2023.

What once were closets have been turned into staff offices to preserve space. The information technology equipment is stored in the middle of an office without proper cooling. The library lacks study rooms and makerspace, and it has no true computer labs or collaborative spaces, Novak said.

The library began using a 2,722-square-foot structure in 2010 made of three triplwide trailer units combined to house a children’s area and one programming room. The exterior matches the materials and color of the main building.

The library already has paid off the 10-acre plot its 15,000-square-foot building sits on, so it will not have to buy any additional land for an expansion.

The library received a temporary use permit in September 2009 to place the trailers on the east side of the library for three years, and it has received extensions since then.

The Village Board approved a five-year extension in December, with Trustee John Piwko casting a vote against it.

“I don’t think they’ll grant us another extension, and we’ll be at the end of life for this structure. It just won’t last, and isn’t built for long-term use,” Novak said.

Marketing and media developer Doug Cataldo said the trailers already were used when the library received them, which means more wear and tear.

Jessica Engle of Lake in the Hills and her 3-year-old daughter, Maebelle, went to a storytime event inside the converted trailer Feb. 8.

“Today was overcrowded, but it varies week to week,” Engle said. “In the summertime there’s more, and it gets too crowded, so we tend not to come. It gets too overwhelming with everybody there.”

Cataldo said an expansion would help ease the workload on staff, who will host two to three extra storytimes a day to accommodate the number of people. Some programs, such as a nature trails art program, have wait lists with demand beyond what the library can host, Cataldo said.

“It’s a huge undertaking for staff, and if we had double the capacity, we could host one storytime day and be able to serve the same amount of people,” Cataldo said.

Novak said Huntley’s library is the third smallest library in Illinois when comparing square foot per capita.

“Huntley is not about trailers – it’s just not,” Novak said. “We are part of the fabric of the community, and I want to make sure we have the very best available.”

The Algonquin Area Public Library District is [borrowing \\$2.1 million](#) to help fund a 8,000-square-foot expansion and renovation of its facilities. The rest of the funding will come from \$4 million in reserves built up in the past dozen years.

The Crystal Lake Public Library board held an advisory referendum to build a new facility,

which [failed in 2016](#). The City Council said it will respect voters' wishes and will not consider issuing bonds.

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