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New Glarus Public Library Site Evaluation Task Force
Preliminary Report, October 15, 2001

Introduction

In June 2001 a Space Needs Assessment conducted by a Library Board-appointed task force determined that the New Glarus Public Library was operating in a space approximately one fifth the size recommended by state standards for its current collection size and level of service. The task force further determined that, according to Department of Public Instruction/Division for Libraries, Technology and Community Learning guidelines, an estimated gross area of between 14,492 and 16,364 square feet would be needed to accommodate the library collection and provide adequate service to the New Glarus community through the year 2020. These findings clearly established the need to initiate a planning process for an expanded library facility.

Charge of the Site Evaluation Task Force

In light of these findings, the Library Board established a Site Evaluation Task Force made up of citizens of the village and surrounding townships, library and village board representatives, and library staff. The task force was charged with the following duties:

- To identify possible library building sites
- To establish a set of criteria for evaluating the various sites suggested
- To develop a scoring system for use with the established criteria
- To gather the findings of the task force into a report
- To make recommendations to Library and Village Boards on the basis of the findings

Sites under consideration

Suggestions for possible library sites came from a variety of sources, including library board and village board members, owners of available properties, library staff and members of the general public. Alternatives for library expansion fell into three categories: expansion possibilities at the current village hall site, remodeling of existing structures, and new construction on an empty lot. The following sites were evaluated:

Expansion possibilities at present library site:

- Current village hall site with addition of second floor
- Current village hall site with addition of community room
- ✓ Remodeling of entire current village hall property into public library

Remodeling of existing structures:

- ✓ Conversion of Monroe Clinic building (corner of 6th Avenue and Duerst Valley Road)
- Conversion of New Glarus Motors building
- Conversion of south structure of former Swiss Miss building complex (Hwy. 69)

New construction:

- ✓ Site of current Glarner Park (between 3rd and 4th Avenue, behind Fire Station)
- Vacant lots adjacent to School House Apartments (former New Glarus Grade School)
- Erb Implement site (218 Railroad Street)
- New Glarus Feed and Fuel (100 2nd Street)

Selection of Preliminary Evaluation Criteria

Since a thorough, professional evaluation of each of the sites under consideration would involve considerable, and possibly unnecessary, expense, it was decided that each site should be submitted to a preliminary evaluation using a few basic criteria. Sites which did not score well on this preliminary evaluation could be eliminated from contention without need for further investigation. While cost of site acquisition is obviously an important factor to consider in selecting a site for a future library, the task force decided not to include it as a determining factor at this point in the proceedings. The following criteria, selected by the task force, provided a basis for assessing whether or not a site warranted more detailed evaluation:

A. Existing structures (including expansion at current village hall site):

- Access -- pedestrian access/safety
-- vehicular access/easy, safe ingress and egress
- Capacity -- is the existing structure big enough?
-- is it structurally adequate (load bearing capacity of at least 150#/ sq. ft.)
-- is there on-site parking, room for expansion?
- Suitability/desirability of location -- is it centrally located, visible?
-- is it a nuisance-free environment (absence of excessive noise, odors, unsightly view)?
-- is library compatible with adjacent uses/services?
- Flexibility of design -- large open space on one level recommended for small libraries
-- is shape/configuration of space compatible with library use?
- Site availability -- is the site available for purchase, and if so, when?
-- are there other complicating factors to consider?

B. Sites involving new construction:

- Access -- pedestrian access/safety
-- vehicular access/easy, safe ingress and egress
- Sufficient land -- is site large enough to support structure, setbacks, landscaping, on-site parking, possible expansion?
- Suitability/desirability of location -- is it centrally located, visible?
-- is it a nuisance-free environment (absence of excessive noise, odors, unsightly view)?
-- is library compatible with adjacent uses/services?
- General condition of site/need for demolition of existing structures
- Site availability -- is the site available for purchase, and if so, when?
-- are there other complicating factors to consider?

Preliminary Evaluation -- Existing Structures: (see Appendix A for evaluation summary in tabular form)

Village Hall sites:

Advantages:

- All three alternatives for expansion of the library within the Village Hall rank highly in terms of access and desirability of location. The Second Street location is visible, safely accessible to both pedestrians and vehicles, reasonably centrally located and has served the library well for many years.

Disadvantages:

- *Current library site with second floor addition:*
Existing library space is 2,248 gross square feet (2,146 net square feet). The addition of a second floor would provide the library with a maximum additional 3,200 gross square feet, for a total of 5,448 gross square feet, far short of the recommended square footage, even if a second floor addition were structurally feasible. Moreover, given the slope of the roof, the 10' clearance requirement for standard book stacks, and the need for an elevator to make the second floor handicapped accessible, it is unlikely that much *useable* square footage would be gained. Given the fact that the addition of a second floor would not solve the library's space problems, other disadvantages of this alternative (such as the undesirability of operating a small library on 2 levels and the necessity of finding temporary quarters during remodeling) need scarcely be labored.
- *Current library site with addition of Community Room:*
Adding the Community Room space plus the corridor, kitchen and store room would provide the library with a total of 4,557 gross square feet, less than half of what is needed to house the current collection and barely a third of what would be needed to accommodate the library through 2020. If the current meeting room and village administrator's office were added, this would result in a gross square footage of 6,276 sq. ft., an area which, again, falls far short of what is recommended; even for current needs.
- *Conversion of entire Village Hall facility to a library:*
The conversion of the entire Village Hall facility, including the police department and village clerk and utility offices, to library space would provide the library with 11,766 gross square feet. While this certainly comes closer to meeting the library's space needs, at least over the short term, creating one large open space out of the many separate rooms which now house the various village departments would be a major and expensive undertaking, would displace all other village departments and would result in a library limited in design flexibility by the constraints of the existing structure, inadequate to meet the library's long-term space needs, and possibly costing more than new construction.

11,000 sq. ft. approx?

New Glarus Motors building:

Advantages:

- The double corner lot on which the present structure stands provides room for expansion. There is also ample parking available.
- Proximity to elementary and high schools could be an advantage for students wishing to use the public library for projects during school hours, and for those wishing to stop in on their way home after school (though this latter would only really benefit walkers).

Disadvantages:

- Of primary concern to task force members is the issue of pedestrian and vehicular safety in accessing this site. The building is located at a staggered intersection which, at certain times of day, is heavily used by both drivers and pedestrians. Add to the mix the fact that at high traffic times many of the drivers along that particular stretch of Second Street are teen drivers and many of the pedestrians young children walking to and from the elementary school who would have to cross Second Street at the staggered intersection to reach the library and you have a potentially very dangerous situation.
- As it stands, the showroom measures 8,600 square feet with the service center occupying an additional ?? square feet (*Do you have the exact figures, Butch?*). The capacity of the structure, therefore, does not meet the library's current, let alone its long-term, space needs. On the plus side, the double corner lot does provide room for expansion and there is ample parking.
- Although close to both elementary and high schools, the location, nine blocks from the downtown area, is not central. Any advantage that might be attributed to proximity to the schools is counterbalanced by the concerns about safe access mentioned above, and by the fact that, once school is out for the day and during weekends and school vacations, there is little in the way of adjacent businesses and services to draw people to that end of town.
- Task force members felt that, even with extensive, substantial and costly remodeling, the present structure would not be suitable for use as a public library. Indeed, task force members suggested that this site would only be worth considering if the present structure were raised and a new library constructed on the parcel. However, given the drawbacks in terms of safe access and location, it seemed futile to pursue the demolition alternative further.
- The site would be available for lease pending relocation (at an as yet undetermined time and to an as yet undetermined location) of the current tenant's business. The Library Board has looked into the matter of leasing space for a public library and is of the opinion that leasing rather than purchasing a site is not in the best interests of the community or the library.

New Glarus Clinic:

Advantages:

- There is reasonably good vehicular access to this site.
- The site will be available within the next 18 months (*Jim, I forget -- is this right?*)
- With a total of 46,800 square feet for the entire land parcel there is more than enough room for on-site parking and expansion. In view of this the task force decided to evaluate both the building itself as a possible remodeling project and the parcel minus the building as a possible site for new construction (see below under **Preliminary Evaluation – Sites involving new construction**)

Disadvantages:

- Pedestrian access is limited by the site's location on the edge of town. Proximity to Highway 39 also makes pedestrian safety a concern.
- The existing clinic facility is built on two levels, providing a total of approximately 4,800 square feet, less than half the square footage needed to meet the library's current space needs and approximately a third of what would be needed to meet its longer term space needs.
- The site location on the western edge of the Village is far removed from both the downtown area and any other compatible businesses and services (unless you count the cemetery!), thereby discouraging walk-in traffic and jeopardizing the library's potential contribution to the vitality of the downtown area.
- Aside from the basic issue of square footage, the two-story design of the building also limits its usefulness as a future library. Library building experts recommend that libraries of less than 20,000 to 25,000 square feet be built as one large open space on a single level. Smaller libraries operating on more than one level incur significant additional costs in terms of staffing and efficiency of service, since both levels must be staffed and materials transported between levels. There is also the expense, both monetary and in terms of space, of an elevator to make the building handicapped accessible. A cursory inspection of the unfinished lower level revealed the presence of multiple support posts, raising doubts as to whether the upper level of the building would meet the load-bearing requirements for a public library.

Former Swiss Miss Textile Mart:

Advantages:

- This site offers reasonable and safe access for both vehicles and pedestrians.
- The location is fairly central, and reasonably close to commercial and business services.

Disadvantages:

- The south structure of this complex provides approximately 10,000 square feet, spread more or less equally over two functional levels. This square footage is barely adequate to address the library's *current* space needs. It makes no allowances for any future growth of the collection or the service population. Added to this is a serious concern as to how much of the 10,000 square feet is really suitable for library use. A structural evaluation of the property found the load-bearing capacity of the floors inadequate for library book stacks. At a cost of \$70,000+ the ground floor load-bearing capacity could be increased to the state code-mandated 150# per square foot. However, this measure would only provide 5,000 square feet of space suitable for use as a library, barely half what is needed to house the *current* collection.
- While this site is fairly centrally located, task force members had strong reservations about taking the library out of the heart of the community and placing it on the Highway 69 commercial strip, wedged between a bank and a tourist motel and facing out onto the highway, away from the downtown. Sited in the heart of the community the library could contribute to the viability of the downtown area and provide a community- rather than tourist-oriented anchor in an area that has increasingly little to offer local residents. Siting the library on the commercial strip would have the effect of hastening the demise of the downtown area as a viable place for local people to do business.
- The issue of design flexibility has already been touched upon above in relation to both the village hall sites and the Monroe Clinic site. Similar concerns pertain to this site. Aside from the issue of whether it would be economically feasible, or even possible, to reinforce the second floor of this structure to meet the load-bearing requirements for library book stacks, the staff would be faced with the additional difficulty of trying to operate a small library with limited personnel on two separate levels. Inevitably, in order to maintain an adequate level of customer service and security, staffing costs would have to increase substantially.
- The structure is vacant and available for lease. However, as mentioned above in the discussion of the New Glarus Motors site, it is the library board's opinion that leasing a space for the public library rather than purchasing a site would not be in the best interests of the community or the library.

Preliminary Evaluation – Sites involving new construction: (see Appendix B for evaluation summary in tabular form)

Glarner Park site:

Advantages:

- The site, close as it is to the library's current facility, is readily accessible for both vehicles and pedestrians.
- The site provides approximately 76,800 square feet of space, more than enough for a 14,500+ square foot structure, on-site parking, landscaping, setbacks, etc. There is also ample room for future expansion.
- The location, adjacent to the fire-station and close to the current village hall/library site, is centrally located within the community and within easy walking distance of the village park, swimming pool, village offices and the commercial center of town.
- The site is village-owned, and, barring other obstacles, could be made available for a library without the additional cost of land acquisition.
- The site is free of existing structures and would incur no demolition costs.

Disadvantages:

- The site currently sees heavy use during the warmer months as a women's softball pitch. Availability would be contingent on the village's willingness to allow the site to be used for a library building and, presumably, on the availability (and purchase) of alternate green space within the village limits to accommodate a softball pitch.

(1) Re-evaluate the ball diamond
Kempner?

(2)

Land adjacent to School House Apartments:

Advantages:

- Access is reasonably safe for both pedestrians and vehicles, though the site's proximity to Highway 39 traffic is a concern for some task force members. Adequate on-site parking would be an absolute necessity, since parking would not be available along the highway.
- The site measures approximately 47,520 square feet. Presumably this would provide sufficient space for the proposed structure, plus on-site parking, landscaping, setbacks, etc.
- The site is centrally located.
- The site is available for sale.
- No demolition work would need to be done at the site.

Disadvantages:

- Proximity to Highway 39 traffic might present a safety problem for those pedestrians (most probably children) who would need to cross the road to reach the library.
- While the location is centrally located within the community, it is in a largely residential neighborhood. Location of the library on this site would not contribute in any measurable way to downtown revitalization, nor would a library on this site be in a position to reap the benefits of proximity to compatible businesses and services.

Erb Implement site:

Advantages:

- *Access – I forget why this was given a “0” grade? Good vehicular access but poor pedestrian, or vice versa?*
- At 62,857 square feet, the site provides more than enough land to accommodate the proposed structure, on-site parking, landscaping, setbacks, etc.
- The site is located across from the Village Park. In its current condition it presents something of an eyesore. If cleaned up and developed for library use, the site could contribute significantly to community beautification efforts.
- At last checking, the site was still available for sale.

Disadvantages:

- *Access (not sure what the issue was here. See above under “advantages.”)*
- While close to the Village Park, the site offers little in the way of compatible businesses and services in the adjacent area. Indeed, the proximity of the stockyard with its regular deliveries of livestock, and the accompanying sounds, sights and smells, is seen as a definite drawback. Additionally, the task force is concerned about the site’s location in the flood plain, immediately adjacent to the Sugar River, and the impact that would have both on building design and construction costs. A third concern with this site is the possibility of environmental contamination and clean-up problems, given the nature of the present owner’s business and the fact that the site lies on the former railway.
- Use of this land for a library would involve demolition of the two buildings currently occupying the site, as well as possibly extensive clean-up of the site.

New Glarus Feed and Fuel:

Advantages:

- Access -- see Erb Implement, above.
- The lot provides approximately 43,560 square feet of land, more than adequate to accommodate a 14,492 square foot structure, on-site parking, landscaping, etc.
- The site is available for sale.

Disadvantages:

- Access -- see Erb Implement above.
- While, in theory, a 43,560 square foot parcel would seem to be more than enough space to accommodate the proposed library, on-site parking, etc., the irregular shape of the site places severe constraints on the configuration and design of a building, and limits the usefulness of a significant portion of the available land.
- The site is neither visible nor particularly centrally located, and has little to offer in the way of compatible adjacent services or commercial activity. In addition to this, it shares several of the disadvantages of the Erb Implement site, including its location in the flood plain, immediately adjacent to the Sugar River, its proximity to the stockyard, and the potential for environmental clean-up problems.
- Use of this land for a library would require demolition of 4 separate buildings currently occupying the site, along with possibly extensive clean-up.

Monroe Clinic site (without current structure):

Advantages:

- There is reasonably good vehicular access to this site.
- A total of 46,800 square feet of available land would provide plenty of space for a proposed library structure, plus parking, landscaping, etc.
- The site will be available for sale within the next 18 months (*correct??*)

Disadvantages:

- Pedestrian access is limited by the site's location on the edge of town. Proximity to Highway 39 also makes pedestrian safety a concern.
- The site location on the western edge of the village is far removed from both the downtown area and any other compatible businesses and services, discouraging walk-in traffic and jeopardizing the library's contribution to the vitality of the downtown area.
- Use of this site for new construction would require the purchase and subsequent demolition of a relatively new, well-maintained two-story building.

Appendix A.

Preliminary Evaluation
Existing structures:

CRITERIA

SITE	Access	Capacity	Desirability of location	Flexibility of design	Site availability	Total score
Village Hall +2 nd floor	+1	-1	+1	-1	0	0
Village Hall +Community Room	+1	-1	+1	-1	0	0
Village Hall: entire facility	+1	-1	+1	-1	0	0
New Glarus Motors	0	-1	-1	-1	0	-3
Monroe Clinic-NG	0	-1	-1	-1	+1	-2
Swiss Miss	+1	-1	0	-1	0	-1

Key to scores:

+1 = positive attribute

0 = neutral/unknown attribute, or positives and negatives cancel one another out

- 1 = negative attribute

Appendix B.

Preliminary Evaluation

Sites under consideration for new construction:

CRITERIA

SITE	Access	Sufficient land	Desirability of location	Site availability	Need for demolition work	Total score
Glärner Park	+1	+1	+1	0	+1	+4
School House Apts.	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+5
Erb Implement site	0	+1	-1	+1	-1	0
NG Feed and Fuel	0	0	-1	+1	-1	-1
Monroe Clinic site (w/o existing structure)	0	+1	-1	+1	-1	0

Key to scores:

+1 = positive attribute

0 = neutral/unknown attribute, or positives and negatives cancel one another out

-1 = negative attribute

