

# Larkspur moves toward library project grant filing

[Adrian Rodriguez](#) November 21, 2021 at 11:55 a.m.



A Larkspur Library patron browses the shelves on Thursday, July 22, 2021. Preliminary estimates for a new 5,000-square-foot library come out to about \$5 million. (Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal)

Larkspur officials are moving closer to a state grant application for a new library even as key project details remain unresolved.

The City Council received an update on the project Wednesday. City Manager Dan Schwarz said the state library infrastructure fund has \$439 million to distribute in matching grants for city library projects.

The guidelines for the grant application have not been released. Uncertainty remains as to how the grant process would work and how much, if any,

funding the project, which could include city offices, would qualify for, Schwarz said.

Preliminary estimates for a new 5,000-square-foot library come out to about \$5 million. A new City Hall building equal in size would cost the same, bringing the total estimate to about \$10 million.

"In my experience it's usually the rule of thumb is ask for the maximum and see what happens and work all the details later," Schwarz said. He said staff could fine-tune the project scope once it's known how much money would be made available.

The grant application is expected to be due in February, he said.

The council is considering a move to the vacant Rose Lane parcel because its 108-year-old City Hall at 400 Magnolia Ave., which houses the library, is in need of a \$10 million to \$12 million renovation.

Rather than paying out of pocket for a renovation, city staff said it could be a better option to build a new library because the grant opportunity could help offset the city's expenses.

Although the grant program is for libraries, city staff plan to design a project in which there is some shared spaces with city offices. The shared-space idea could help shake out the maximum windfall, Schwarz said.

The city also recently received a \$1 million state grant toward the effort, though that money will not count as local funds to leverage for the matching grant.

Additionally, the Commons Foundation, a nonprofit raising money for the library, has collected \$1.8 million in cash and pledges.

The city also has several funds it could draw from if the council chooses, Schwarz said.

About \$800,000 is sitting in the Measure C fund, which was originally designated for the fire department maintenance and investments. Some of that money could be redirected to support the library, Schwarz said.

Likewise, Measure B, the city's sales tax for road repair, has been successful because of a boom in online sales with deliveries made to Larkspur throughout the pandemic. As much as \$1.4 million is expected to be available in reserves.

In all, there is expected to be \$6 million to \$10 million in city funds that could be used toward the library project, Schwarz said.

Resident Chris Wheaton, a member of the Rose Lane Homeowners Association, said neighbors are concerned about traffic, parking and what the buildings might look like.

"We just ask all the council members to look at this as if it were being put in your backyard," he said. "And take it into that consideration as to whether you would want the traffic or the parking or the aesthetic."

The fate of City Hall is still unknown.

"The only thing the council has decided is that the library is moving," Schwarz said.

Councilwoman Catherine Way said that's a discussion for down the road.

"Renovating that is going to cost a lot of money," Way said. "The library is the priority and the space the people are envisioning to me is the priority."

In separate actions, the council also extended an agreement with the Commons Foundation to raise funds through next year. The council also voted unanimously to dedicate the property on Rose Lane as "the Commons."

Joe Jennings, president of the Commons Foundation, said it is encouraged by the city's commitment to build a modern library.

"We believe the city is making a very strong, good faith effort to identify all possible sources of funds for the state grant application, due in February 2022, and to leverage the Commons Foundation's work to build the best buildings possible," he said. "It is time for the Larkspur community to come together and raise cash and pledges to build the best buildings, public square, and parking possible with the city and the state's support."