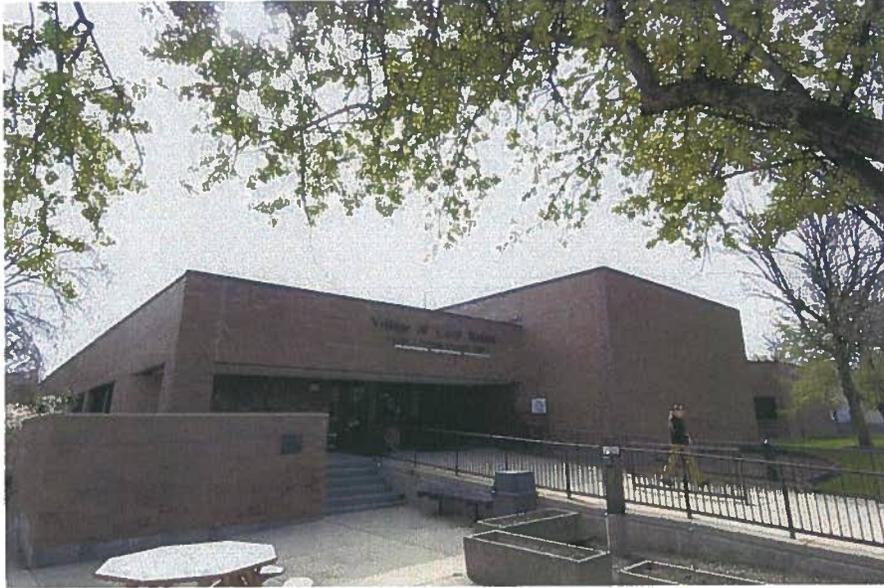


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Carol Stream hears options for a village hall upgrade



Given three other concepts, Carol Stream trustees favor a possible expansion of the building that houses their village hall and police station.

Daily Herald file photo



Katlyn Smith

Carol Stream trustees appear ready to hire architects to begin designing a possible overhaul of the building that houses their village hall and police station.

Given three other options, the board clearly favored one concept Thursday: demolishing a portion of the building and replacing it with a three-level addition containing a basement, main level and second floor.

That project -- roughly estimated to cost \$13.1 million to \$15.6 million -- would also remodel the rest of the building on Gary Avenue.

The lion's share of the work could feasibly be funded by millions in reserves that have been accumulating by budget surpluses, officials said.

The village could transfer roughly \$10 million in cash toward the project, a move that would still leave reserves at just above the minimum threshold: 25 percent of village operating expenses, Finance Director Jon Batek said.

Another possibility is borrowing money to pay for a portion of the project. Issuing so-called general obligation bonds offers the most attractive financing, Batek said, but towns pledge to pay off that debt through property taxes.

Carol Stream doesn't charge a property tax. If officials chose to issue those bonds, the village would instruct the county clerk's office not to levy a property tax on its behalf and identify another revenue source to pay principal and interest payments on the debt, Batek said.

"The plan would be to abate 100 percent of that before it hits the tax bill," he said.

Village Manager Joe Breinig stressed officials are in the early stages of funding discussions for a potential project and cautioned that the village would have to "tighten" its purse strings if reserves were spent down to the minimum threshold.

"It's going to force us into a little bit more structured environment for spending," he told the board.

Outside of grants the village might receive, roadwork and other capital projects are exclusively funded by budget surpluses, Batek said. This year, he anticipates the general fund yielding a \$4.4 million surplus, due in part to increases in sales-tax revenues.

Other concepts proposed by Williams Architects included building a new, combined police station and village hall on another site, a project estimated to cost from \$23.6 million to \$26.6 million.

Another option -- constructing a police station on another site and remodeling the existing village hall -- could cost from \$22.4 million to \$26 million.

The final, cheapest concept calls for a smaller addition on the south side of the building and renovating the village hall, estimated to cost \$10.1 million to \$12.4 million.

Those prices didn't factor in acquiring property, and trustees support the current location of village hall.

"It gives room to breathe," Trustee David Hennessey said of adding on.

Built in 1979, the 40,400-square-foot building is undersized and presents security and accessibility issues, architects say.

The building's roof, exterior, windows and a fire suppression system are generally in good condition, according to Williams Architects. But the Itasca-based firm recommends a facility of about 54,730 square feet, a footprint that would meet "near-term" plans for the village's workforce.

The police department, for example, is expected to grow from a current staff of 89 employees to 93 over the next few years.

The next step for the board is approving an agreement with architects to prepare detailed designs. The design process could take nine to 10 months, said Mark Bushhouse, president of Williams Architects.

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