



**Middle School Project
Potential Partners/Stakeholders
Working Group**

Report & Recommendations

**Submitted to the New Richmond Area Community
Government Entities Network**

**by Patrick Overton,
Government Entities Network Facilitator**

Monday, July 27, 2009

Executive Summary

The following is an executive summary of recommendations made to the Government Entities Network by the Middle School Project Working Group in fulfillment of their charge to identify possible uses of the Middle School building after it is vacated in 2011. It is important to understand these are preliminary recommendations and other possibilities exist that may be considered. The Working Group feels strongly that any decision to move forward with any of the recommendations in this report should be based on an extensive, community-based, citizen-engaged planning process. It also should be noted that none of the recommendations utilize any portion of the existing Old Middle School building which has been recommended for demolition.

1. Community Education will be responsible for the building and the scheduling of all shared space in the Middle School facility for the primary purpose of promoting diverse opportunities for lifelong education available to all citizens;
2. Community Education and WITC will work together in close collaboration to utilize classes to present community education courses, specialty classes, training programs, and other life-long learning experiences available to citizens;
3. Create a conference room out of one of the classrooms that can be used by all Middle School Project Partners/Stakeholders with Community Education having responsibility for scheduling of the room;
4. The Community Foundation locate their office in the Middle School building and have access to the shared conference room and shared administrative services area located in Room 101;
5. The Senior Center locate their program in the former Choir room; have use of the storage closet next to the old Choir room; have access to use of the kitchen for meals; and have access to the Commons (10:00 – 2:00) for Seniors to eat;
6. The Five Loaves Food and Clothing Center be located in the North end of the building, using one room for the Food Shelf, one room for the Clothing Center, and consideration given to one additional room for storage;
7. The New Richmond Area Ambulance District be given (or leased) land at the Northwest corner of the Middle School grounds to build a new 8,000 sq. ft. facility should it decide a building on that site meets their needs;
8. The New Richmond Area Community Centre be given access to the Gym, locker rooms, and mezzanine for athletic activities as well as two rooms for child care;
9. The New Richmond Area Youth Sports Association be given a room for use as an office, perhaps in a shared “nonprofit incubator space, as well as access to the shared conference room and administrative services area resources;
10. The Library will not be located in the Middle School Building due to lack of available space. The Working Group encourages the City of New Richmond, the City’s Library Board, and the Board of Education to give consideration to locating the new Library in the old Middle School footprint in order to maximize the capacity of the Middle School Project to serve the diverse needs of the citizens of the New Richmond Area Community.

I. Report Introduction

This report represents the final data gathering process needed to help members of the Government Entities Network make a decision about their recommendation to the New Richmond Area School District Board of Education. This process began in March 2008 with a Community Conversation convened to explore options related to possibly locating a new the Library building in the footprint of the old Middle School building (the southwest portion of the current structure). The Conversation was presented in partnership between the Front Porch Project and the Government Entities Network and was the basis for GEN moving forward with its conversations about what happens to the Middle School building and land when it is vacated in 2011. At their April 8, 2008 meeting, GEN members decided to address the Middle School issue (see Appendix # 2 for meeting minutes and the Library Community Conversation transcripts).

In July of 2008, GEN held a meeting that included all elected board/council members from the four Townships, the Village of Star Prairie, and the City of New Richmond. There were 34 individuals at that meeting. The outcome of the meeting was a decision to present a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to the Board of Education requesting the Board consider transfer of ownership of the Middle School building and land to the a newly created Regional Library Board or other structure to run the Library, with the new library to be built in the footprint of the Old Middle School Building after it was demolished. The MOU also indicated GEN would propose various mixed-use design options for the remaining Middle School building. The MOU was signed by three Townships and the City of New Richmond. For details of these meetings including minutes from the April, 08 GEN meeting; the report from the July 28th GEN meeting; and a copy of the MOU sent to the Board of Education, see Appendix # 3.

In October of 2008, the Board of Education sent a letter to GEN indicating that it would be willing to entertain the options presented to them in the MOU (see Appendix # 4). GEN commenced further discussion on all aspects of the MOU including the possibilities of building the Library in the old Middle School footprint including mixed-use of the remaining Middle School building; creating a new Regional Library Board to be responsible for the Library building; addressing the 71%/29% usage tax shortfall, and exploring how the remaining part of the building might be used. Primary consideration was being given to the City of New Richmond either owning or leasing the building and using it for City office space and/or various City/area community organizations.

In November of 2008, the City Council decided against pursuing ownership of the Middle School building. At its January 5, 2009 meeting, new recommendations were submitted to GEN for consideration including submitting a new MOU to the Board of Education (Appendix # 5). GEN unanimously approved a draft of a new MOU to send to the Board of Education (see Appendix # 6). All GEN members except New Richmond Township signed the MOU. It proposed the Board of Education keep ownership of the Middle School building and locate the School District Community Education Program in the building to serve as anchor to coordinate/schedule all shared space in the building. At the April, 2009 GEN meeting, Morrie Veilleux indicated that the Board of Education approved moving forward with discussions on the new MOU concepts. GEN directed Patrick Overton, GEN facilitator, to create a Working Group of potential partners and stakeholders to explore possibilities for mixed-use of the Middle School building and return to GEN with recommendations no later than July, 2009. This document represents the Working Group's final report and recommendations.

Working Group Recommendations

1. Community Education

With offices currently located in the School District Office, the Community Education Program schedules hundreds of classes each semester and summer as well as being the main scheduler for District buildings for community use. Community Education currently utilizes spaces in various locations including The SPACE, Farm & Home, The Deerfield, The Centre, and the Heritage Center, just to name a few. The purpose of locating the Community Education Program in the Middle School building and making it the anchor Partner would be twofold: First, to provide additional space for existing and expanding Community Education programs which are located throughout the District; and second, to provide an anchor organization that will be responsible for scheduling all of the spaces in the building. The needs identified for Community Education include:

- Front Office Space (offices, work room, copy room, and small meeting room);
- Classrooms (shared space) for Computer labs, Art Room, Tech Ed., Wood Working Shop; Music Room; Band Room, FCE Room for preschool/cooking classes
- Commons (shared space)/Cafeteria/kitchen (shared space)
- Gym/Gym Mezzanine (shared space)
- Shared Space for Pre-School/After-school programs

Working Group recommendations include:

- Room 101 Offices & Reception area/copy Room, shared room, etc
- Room 107 Shared Conference Room Scheduled by Community Education
- Rooms 112/114/118/102/103/104/105/124/125 (Shared Classroom Space)
- Rooms 113/121 Computer Room/Band Room for Computer Services
- Commons (shared space scheduled by Community Education)
- Kitchen (shared space with Senior Citizen Center, others as needed)

2. Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College

WITC is in growing and needs additional space for special programs. The College is very interested in exploring ways in which WITC can utilize space at the Middle School to launch special program initiatives. Among the various needs expressed by the WITC representative at the last meeting, the following items were listed with the understanding that there would be a lot of shared space usage, especially in partnership with the Community Education Program.

- Expanded classrooms for WITC specialty classes
- Classrooms for shared WITC/Community Education shared classes and programming
- Room(s) for Older Adult Programming
- Computer Lab/Distance Education classroom capacity (ITV Lab)
- Possible WITC Charter School Partnership with the School District

Working Group recommendations include:

- All spaces listed under Community Education designated as Shared Space
- The District Community Education Program and WITC are already in a very strong collaborative partnership which would continue and expand when the Middle School conversion project is completed.

3. The New Richmond Centre (former YMCA)

The Centre is now a locally run, nonprofit organization with its own Board of Directors. It has undergone substantial organizational revitalization and almost doubled its membership in less than six months. Some of the current Centre facilities are old and need renovation. Right now the Centre is interested in continued partnership with the Community Education Program and their request for space includes use of the current Middle School Gym (one of the newer portions of the building) and associated space. They also need room for child care (this could possibly be shared space).

The Gym
Locker rooms
Some or all of the Mezzanine
Space for child care

Working Group recommendations include

Room 129 (the Gym) – Shared Space Scheduled by Community Education
Gym Locker Rooms/Mezzanine – Shared Space Scheduled by Comm. Ed.
Rooms 114118 (FCE) – Child Care – Shared Space Scheduled by Comm. Ed.

4. New Richmond Area Community Foundation (NRACF)

The Foundation has recently undertaken a major organizational transition and has emerged as one of the New Richmond area community's major cultural catalysts, including serving as lead agency for the New Richmond Area Community Front Porch Project. It is currently looking for shared/incubator type space that will provide it a good community interface while meeting the needs of a small, nonprofit, part-time staffed organization. Their list includes:

Office space to accommodate two work stations, files, project space, and guest reception
Conference room with seating for 15-20 around one table (used up to 4 times a month)
Small conference room space for meetings of 3-6 people (used 5-10 times a month)
Possible Shared Administrative Services (copy machine with access codes allowing cost-sharing usage)
Heavy duty simple office equipment including 3-hole punch, high-capacity stapler, spiral binder, etc.

Total Space Request 150 – 300 sq. ft.

Working Group recommendations include:

Room 107 Office Space
Room 106 Shared Conference Room
Room 101 Shared office equipment/small meeting room

5. The New Richmond Area Youth Sports Association (NRAYSA)

The NRAYSA is a fairly new organization, having formed a coalition of former independent sports groups/organizations in the area. They do a lot of cooperative programming and work closely with the Community Education Program. They are looking for shared space where they can have a small office to locate files and some nonprofit incubator services. Their list of needs include:

One Dedicated Office Space with Shared Administrative Services
Board/Meeting Room (shared space) for Board/committee meetings
Possible shared space use of the Gym for sports leagues

Total Space Request 150 – 9,000 sq. ft.

Working Group recommendations include:

Room 101 Shared Space for Copy Machine, Reception area, etc.
Room 111 Non-Profit Incubator Office Space
Room 106 Shared Conference Room/Scheduled by Community Education
Room 129 Shared Gym space scheduled by Community Education
Room 129 Shared Locker Rooms/Mezzanine

6. The Senior Center (County Aging & Disabilities Resource Center)

The Senior Center is currently located in the basement of a building in the downtown area of New Richmond. It is currently used primarily as space to organize meal service to approximately 17-20 meals outside the building and 20-30 meals within the building. It also serves as a place for Seniors to gather, visit, play cards and bingo. Right now, it is utilized by a rather small segment of the Older Adult population in New Richmond and generally consists of individuals considered Senior Older Adults. The Center is run through the County Aging and Disabilities Resource Center with the help of a local volunteer board. There is one paid, part-time staff person, a nutritionist. Their greatest need is for use of the Cafeteria for the meal service and the use of the Commons area for social interaction. Shared space with the Commons is possible but it must guarantee all federal, state, and local food standards are met.

The Commons (from 10:00 – 2:00)
One large Meeting Room/Adequate Storage space
Room for Tuesday's "Day Away Program"
Cafeteria for Meals on Wheels and Place to eat Senior Meals on site

Total Space Request 2,000 – 4,000 sq. ft.

Working Group recommendations include:

Room 120 Former Choir Room including offices
Storage Closet next to room 120
Commons (from 10:00 – 2:00 for meals)
Kitchen – Shared with and scheduled by Community Education
Room 106 Shared Conference Room
Room 101 Shared copy machine/equipment

7. Five Loaves Food and Clothing Center

The Five Loaves Food and Clothing Center provides an essential service to those individuals in the New Richmond area community in need of food assistance and clothing. It is run by a nonprofit volunteer board. It was begun in 1986 and has been in numerous locations since its inception. Currently, it is located in a portion of the Old Creamery Building. One of the important concerns Five Loaves needs to address is the issue of privacy. Some people feel uncomfortable being seen going into the Five Loaves Food and Clothing Center so a separate, private entrance is an important part of their space request. Other “wants/needs” include:

- Adequate room for Food Storage
- Refrigeration units for cold/freezer food
- Separate room for clothing inventory
- Private Entrance/Loading Dock

Total Space Request 2,000 – 4,000 sq. ft.

Working Group recommendations include:

- Rooms 108/109 with Separate entrance
- Provisions for accessible loading dock
- Additional storage space (possibly room 110)

8. The Friday Memorial Library

The Friday Memorial Library is currently out of space and has been functioning with space limitations for at least the past five years. There are efforts underway to find a new location for the Library. One of the possibilities being explored through the partnership efforts with the Government Entities Network including the City and at least three of the Townships is putting the Library on the Middle School site. This could be a new building in one of two locations; a segment of the newer portion of the building renovated into adaptive re-use; or possibly a combination of adaptive re-use of space and new construction (possibly completed in phases). While the request for space in the initial Stakeholders meeting was high, the space request is presented by the Library with knowledge that there would be a lot of space the Library needs that could be identified as part of the shared space overseen/scheduled by the Community Education Program.

Total Space Request: 25,000 - 30,000

Working Group recommendations include:

The Sub-Committee wrestled with this recommendation because every potential user/partner in the Middle School building conversation recognizes the great possibilities that exist if the Library is somehow connected to the project. Unfortunately, because of the large amount of square footage required by the Library, all efforts to put it within the converted Middle School space resulted in there being no room left for any of the other partners including (and most importantly) the Community Education Program. As a result, the Sub-Committee is recommending the Library not be located within the newer portion of Middle School Building.

The Potential Project Partners/Stakeholders encourage consideration be given to constructing a new Library building next to the converted Middle School building after tearing down the old Middle School building. Another alternative is to locate the Library somewhere else on the remaining Middle School site. But the Sub-Committee recognizes that it was not charged with resolving this issue and that whatever happens to the Library is a decision to be made by the City of New Richmond, the City's Library Board, the New Richmond Area School District Board of Education and the citizens these government entities serve. The Working group believes serious deliberation should be given to the benefit of the Library being somehow connected to the Middle School conversion project. The Working Group participants believe the Library could be an exciting, creative, and contributing partner to the Project and, as such, should explore all possibilities through an open and transparent community-based, citizen-engaged planning process.

9. The New Richmond Area Community Ambulance District

The Ambulance District has been notified by the City of New Richmond that they will no longer be able to share the Firehouse space. They have been told they will need to vacate that building sometime within the next 1-2 years. As the Ambulance District has begun to explore what it needs in a new building, the suggestion has been made to explore how it might fit into an adaptive, re-use space at the Middle School. The following items were presented with the understanding that the Ambulance Building (new or adaptive reuse) will be dedicated space that can not be shared with other partners in the building.

Room for Parking Equipment
Living Space
Training Space

Total Space Request: 7,500 - 8,000

Working Group recommendations include:

Dividing off a portion of the Northwest corner of the lot to total the amount of sq. ft. needed to construct a new Ambulance District building. The School District could continue to own the land and provide a \$1.00 a year lease or, as it might consider doing with the Library, give the land outright to the Ambulance District.

10. New Richmond Front Porch Project “Older Adult Task Force”

This is an informal working-group created by the Front Porch Project Advisory Council. Its purpose is to explore/identify/address the needs of the aging population in the New Richmond area community. It is not a program organization but is likely to make recommendations (perhaps in conjunction with the current Senior Citizens Center programming) that will expand the programming resources available to older adults in our community. The only space needs that can currently be identified relate to the possibility of creating an expanded Senior/Older Adult Computer Training Programs that would include numerous offices and computer equipment. Any such program would undoubtedly be in cooperation with existing agencies (such as Community Education, the Library, St. Croix Country Aging and Disabilities Resource Center, etc.). For purposes of this report, we will not be listing any specific space request but urge all future planning to be inclusive of all older adult needs within the New Richmond Area Community.

Report Conclusion

The Government Entities Network (GEN) was asked by the New Richmond Area School District to make a recommendation to the Board of Education regarding what happens to the building following it being vacated in 2011. The Board made this request because GEN represents the exact same geographical area of the School District. Thus, being the elected entities representing the citizens of the various Towns, Village, and City, the Board felt that GEN could work together to assist the Board in its decision-making process. They also felt it was the best way to maximize the Middle School building and land to serve the greatest number of citizens in the New Richmond area community.

While not intended for this purpose, the invitation from the Board of Education also provided an opportunity for the members of GEN to move beyond past differences and pre-existing conflict. This has been a challenge not always easy to meet. But the members of GEN have been persistent in their determination to address the hard issues they encountered in order to make headway and submit a viable, workable plan to the Board of Education. The Working Group was just one of many mechanisms used to reach this point in the process. There was a very successful Community Conversation on the Library. There was an intensive full Board/Council meeting, with 34 elected representatives serving the four Towns, the Village, and the City of New Richmond to address the possibilities that existed. And GEN members have met on a monthly basis focusing on this issue. And there will be many more avenues for citizen input in a continuing and transparent decision making process about the future of this building.

Along the way of addressing the various uses of the Middle School and associated possibilities of potentially locating a new library structure on the Middle School grounds (in the footprint of the old Middle School building after it is demolished), something unexpected happened. The members of GEN became aware of a serious problem regarding the funding process for the Library. The Townships and the Village citizens have only been paying 71% of their share of the cost of using the Library while the citizens of New Richmond have been paying the 29% not covered by outside users. This is the result of a decision by the County Government, not the local government entities. Instead of sweeping this under the rug or refusing to deal with it, this issue has dominated the GEN meetings for almost a full year. GEN members have made serious headway in reaching consensus on a creative and self-initiated resolution to the matter. This, in and of itself, validates the value of GEN and commitment to open dialogue and finding ways to work together.

The purpose of this report is not to present a completed plan for GEN to adopt or approve. The Middle School Project Working Group was commissioned by GEN to be a fact-finding group by exploring options that exist for mixed-use of the Middle School Building (minus the old Middle School structure that is slated for demolition). The Working Group's charge was to look at possibilities, evaluate resources, and make recommendations that the Group believes could maximize the resources that could be provided by the soon-to-be vacated school building. The Working Group knows there are other possibilities that will and should be considered. It also knows these conversations need to engage all citizens in the New Richmond area community. But the Working Group also recognized that its task, under a rigid and demanding timeline, was to explore options, evaluate them, and determine what possibilities exist. If nothing else, as one reads this report, it is impossible not to understand the incredible opportunities that exist if we can find a way to continue to work together in collaborative partnerships.

For some, the recommendation not to locate the new Library in the newer portion of the Middle School structure, was a disappointing outcome of the process. But the reader of this report should remember that the Government Entities Network wasn't asked by the Board of Education to determine whether or not a new library could be put into the building. The Board of Education charged the Government Entities Network to come up with what it believes is the best possible use of the existing, usable portion of the building after the old Middle School structure is demolished. And GEN gave that same charge to the Working Group. The recommendation not to include the new library in the building was because a structure needing that much space simply can not fit into the Middle School building and still leave room for any of the other partners, including Community Education, the entity identified to anchor the building.

That being said, the Working Group also wants to make it clear that they believe having a new library building connected to the building, either by building in the old Middle School footprint or somewhere else on the Middle School land, would provide a wonderful opportunity for taking the goal of partnerships, collaboration, and coordination further than anyone every imagined possible in our community. This kind of interactive, collaborative work of mixed-use facilities offer opportunities for diverse organizations and entities to cooperate and collaborate together, maximizing local resources. This kind of approach is happening all over the country. Adaptive reuse of older buildings (many of the educational facilities) represents a positive and creative new life to structures that otherwise would be torn down or abandoned. And new libraries are being built all around the county based on the concept of creating new opportunities for mixed-use partnerships and collaborations. The issue for many communities is they simply don't have the facility resources to implement this kind of planning. Because of the potential of the Middle School, the New Richmond area community does. Recognizing that the citizens of the New Richmond area community have already paid for this building, it makes sense to consider every possible new use for the building. Finding ways to maximize that resource with the potential of a new library could bring is very exciting.

While the Working Group and the Government Entities Network recognize that the final decision on the location of the Library is not their decision to make, it still has a responsibility to talk about possibilities. And there are many creative possibilities that exist by building a new library structure connected to the Middle School building.

The decision regarding the library rests in the hands of the City of New Richmond; the New Richmond Library Board; and the citizens of New Richmond. But ultimately, as the intensive process of GEN making a final recommendation to the Board of Education has shown, it is the citizens who paid taxes for the Middle School as well as those who use the library that are the key stakeholders in this decision making process. As the process to finalize this decision moves forward, it is essential to continue having an open, inclusive process that promotes citizen and community-based self-determination.

This report is submitted on behalf of the Working Group participants. It is submitted with the hope that it will assist the Government Entities Network in its efforts to work together to come up with a creative and workable proposal to the New Richmond Area School District Board of Education that represents all of the key stakeholders in the New Richmond area community.

Middle School Project Potential Partners/Stakeholders

Working Group Participant List

New Richmond School District	Morrie Veilleux
New Richmond School District Community Education Program	Cheryl Emerson
Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College	Dori Marty
The Deerfield	JoAnn Wrich, Jackie Waalen
Friday Memorial Library	Scott Vrieze, Jeff Peplau, Gordon Granroth
Front Porch Project Advisory Council Older Adult Task Force	Marilyn McCarty
Five Loaves Food and and Clothing Center	Mona Flanum
Senior Center (County Aging Disabilities Resource Center)	Laura Rebhan/Dee Quin Brad Beckman, Tracy Davis
New Richmond Area Youth Sports Association	Dave Mehls/Joe Kerlin
NR Area Community Centre	Darian Blattner
NR Area Ambulance District	Matt Melby/ Jean Needham
NR Area Community Foundation	Jim Counter, Michele Hermansen

Government Entities Network Working Group Report & Recommendations Appendices

Appendix # 1	Map of Middle School Building Rooms	<i>page 13</i>
Appendix # 2	April, 2008 GEN Minutes/Documents	
	2a GEN Meeting Minutes	<i>page 14</i>
	2b Community Conversation transcripts	<i>page 16</i>
Appendix # 3	July 28 th GEN Full Board Minutes/Documents	
	3a Meeting Summary	<i>page 22</i>
	3b MOU Draft Submitted to Board Of Education	<i>page 26</i>
Appendix # 4	Letter from Morrie Veilleux Indicating Board of Education Response to MOU	<i>page 27</i>
Appendix # 5	January 5 th Recommendations for Action Submitted to GEN by Patrick Overton	<i>page 28</i>
Appendix #6	New MOU Submitted to New Richmond Area School District Board of Education	<i>page 33</i>

*Map
Of
Middle
School
Rooms*

**Minutes from the New Richmond Area Community
City/Township/Village Task Force - April, 2008**

Those in attendance included: Dave Schnitzler, Dennis Horner, Jim Zajkowski, Doug Rivard, Dick Hesselink, John VanDyke, Warren Bader, Pete Kling, and Morrie Veilleux. Fred Horne was invited to attend to discuss the Library community conversation

The meeting started with a discussion on the Community Conversation that was held in March regarding the new library. Everyone agreed that it was a positive meeting and that people felt free to express their ideas. It was clear that most people in the room agreed that the Middle School was a very good possibility for locating the new library. The conversation then turned to whether or not to explore making it a regional library and there was agreement this was the direction that should be taken right now. Patrick indicated that he would ask Scott and Jeff to attend the next meeting in May (Wednesday, May 27th). He also asked Morrie to invite his School Board President to attend as well.

Patrick then discussed the completion of the New Richmond Area Cultural Plan. He indicated that the plan currently calls for the City/Township/Village Task Force to become formalized into the New Richmond Area Community Government Entities Network. He indicated that the assessment/planning process had identified four major issues that needed to be address. The first is the ongoing boundary line agreement negotiations; the second was the potential for creating a regional library, using the Middle School Site as the location for the new building; the third was establishing a regional park board to oversee the Hatfield Lake Regional Park; and finally, addressing the issues with the County and its outreach and services to the area communities.

Patrick also discussed that the cultural plan called for establishing a five million dollar cultural trust for the purpose of supporting programs, staff, and operations, for the nonprofit organizations in the community as well as supporting the various “social gathering places” in the community. The plan also proposes launching a fifteen million dollar cultural facilities capital fund to support such projects as the new library, the Hatfield Lake Regional Park, the Town Center/Downtown Four Corners gathering place work, and other various projects in the city of New Richmond and possibly in various townships and the Village.

He said that the plan calls for the New Richmond Area Community Foundation to assume the role of lead agency for implementing the cultural plan and serving as a cultural catalyst to assist the community in raising the money to fund the cultural trust and cultural facilities capital fund.

Following this report, there was a lengthy discussion on what the City/Township/Village Task Force had accomplished and what was remaining to do. One of the issues Patrick raised was how the group would be structured. Patrick strongly recommended that we broaden participation in the group to help develop more ownership of the process in the townships and the City. One major concern for everyone was the continued absence of Star Prairie Village. Dave Schnitzler indicated that he would follow-up and once again invite them to participate. But, the group agreed that numerous outreach efforts have already been made and Star Prairie Village has chosen not to participate. The group stated its preference for Star Prairie Village to be involved but everyone agreed there is nothing that can be done if they choose not to do so.

The conversation then turned to the recommendations in the cultural planning report. Patrick then presented each item and requested a vote from the Task Force members as to whether or not they supported “*in principle*” the following recommendations:

1. The Task Force should continue, becoming the New Richmond Area Community Government Entities Network; should broaden its membership to include more representatives from the City and Townships and that the Network would operate under the auspices of the Front Porch Project with the New Richmond Area Community Foundation serving as lead agency

Vote: unanimous

2. We will institute a cultural facilities master planning process over the next year facilitated by the Front Porch Project under the auspices of the New Richmond Area Community Foundation (as lead agency), working in conjunction with the Government Entities Network to address the library, the regional park, the town center “Gathering Place” projects and any other cultural facility issues identified in the townships/city/village.

Vote: unanimous

2. We should pursue creating a regional library system that would oversee the planning, construction, and operations of the new library and that the Middle School site is the best possible site for locating the new library

Vote: unanimous

3. The new group should pursue creating a regional park board to oversee the Hatfield Lake Regional Park and, if such a board is established, the City agrees that it will turn over ownership of the park to the regional board even though the City has already invested 2.5 million dollars into the project

Vote: unanimous

4. The City agrees that any future discussions with the School District regarding the new road and/or new schools will not be linked in any way to either the discussions on using the Middle School for the new library or anything connected to possible future discussions relating to the Hatfield Lake Regional Park

Vote: unanimous

5. Patrick Overton, as facilitator of the Front Porch Project, under the auspices of the New Richmond Area Community Foundation serving as lead agency, will continue to facilitate the new Regional Government Entities Network.

Vote: unanimous

Patrick indicated that he would prepare minutes of this meeting, send them out to the group, and have them available for review and approval at the next meeting.

Following the voting for these items, Patrick asked the group if Fred Horne could be invited back to represent the City and the group agreed. The May meeting will focus on the possibilities related to establishing a regional library system and the proposed structure for the New Richmond Area Community Government Entities Network.

Patrick proposed that we meet in the School District Conference room in May and then begin to take the meetings to the Townships starting in June. Everyone agreed.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned.

**New Richmond Area
Community Conversation Transcription
March 24, 2008**

On March 24th, 58 New Richmond Area Community citizens gathered in the Middle School Media Room and spent three hours exploring issues related to potentially locating the new library on that site following its vacation in 2011. Scott Vrieze, Director of the current Friday Memorial Library presented a short overview of the current situation facing the Library. In addition, he shared preliminary thoughts of the Library Board regarding space needs for a new library and a very general estimated cost of building it. He also indicated that the Library Board and the City of New Richmond have explored the possibility of locating the new Library on the footprint of the Old Middle School building.

Patrick Overton, facilitator for this Community Conversation then gave those in attendance an overview of conversations that are going on with the informal Government Entities Network consisting of representatives of the governments of the City of New Richmond, Star Prairie Village, and the Townships of Stanton, Erin Prairie, Richmond, and Star Prairie. He indicated that there are preliminary discussions on the possibility of establishing a New Richmond Area Regional/Community Library.

He then indicated the purpose of the Community Conversation was to encourage open, creative, and civil discussion among the participants related to all aspects of the Library, the possibility of a new Library building, establishing a regional library system, and what happens to the current Friday Memorial Library should a new library be built. He encouraged the individuals located at each of the tables to write their questions, issues, concerns, opportunities on a 3x5 card in front of them and, when everyone was finished, to then share what they wrote with the others at their table. Following the general discussion, he then facilitated a plenary discussion on what each of the tables had discussed.

Before the individuals began writing, Overton explained that the purpose of the Community Conversation was not to make a decision regarding a new library or to decide where the library should go. The purpose of the Conversation was to present current thoughts about the Library and the challenges it faces; explore various options on what the community (the entire New Richmond Area Community) might do in response to these challenges; and, to explore in particular what the citizen participants thought about the possibility of locating a new library building on the old Middle School site once the building is vacated in 2011.

The following transcripts are taken from the statements written on each of the cards. They are not in any ranked order but rather represent a random list of participant comments. While there were summary comments from the plenary session, the facilitator believes the complete list of comments, issues, concerns, opportunities best reflects the outcome of the evening's Community Conversation.

Library Community Conversation Transcriptions

Question # 1 Following the presentations made this evening, what are your general responses to the need for a new Library Building and the possibility of locating this on the current Old Middle School footprint.

1. Where would the parking be for the library itself or, is it shared with the community spaces building parking?
2. Would taxes be increased when the library and community spaces are built?
3. Good idea with great potential
4. Costs: Construction of the library/renovation needs for rest of building; maintenance needs of the library and the rest of the building
5. How can it be set up so it is equitable to most?
6. I agree that there is a need
7. Very much like the middle school site
8. Not being involved with the library, the size proposed seems much, but Scott made some very good points for the size
9. Keep park-like Amenities
10. Space is very needed – growth as far as community has grown a lot
11. Another empty building in town? What do we do with that?
12. What about the Pamida building. City market building?
13. A lot more parking here (pro!)
14. Fairly centrally located (pro)
15. Technology has been added to the current library (ie: more system, computers, etc.) already mentioned this also requires additional space
16. The time is now to move forward on this project site for the new library and the specific site for the library seems right without much further discussion
17. The current library is outdated!
18. We need a new library urgently!
19. The middle school site is a suitable site
20. How do we advance this process
21. Include open space!!
22. I feel far more positive about this than when I came
23. Excellent location for town
24. Needs were well presented
25. Like the concept of a center for all groups
26. I agree that the library is in serious need of expansion
27. I agreed that use of the middle school property for the broad community and for high traffic/constant use purposes would serve the community well in this centralized location
28. Construction needs to be forward-thinking:
 - economical & practical – cost efficient
 - designed for longevity, not obsolescence
 - planned to last 50-75 years
 - ecological and energy efficient
29. Definitely do not expand a building on Glover Park – eats up green space, no parking
30. If a new library is built start thinking about its name – a generic if to include a whole district, not just new Richmond – definitely not Friday Memorial Library

31. Favorable – when other uses are incorporated with the library – vision of a Barnes and Noble approach
32. Define: Funding/allocation; control; operational costs/future; operational costs past 5 years
33. What is the scope? Library/community center/senior center
34. Great idea! Keep the gym, newer part of school, and kitchen. Use what the library doesn't use for community education classes, cooking classes, etc.
35. Great location, parking, etc.
36. Traffic flow is important – consider one-way streets
37. Will these increased resources for the “intellectual middle-aged” people? More NY times/best sellers, etc
38. Important to have a physical gym included (attached)
39. Will the design be inviting to the “shy” adults?
40. Great location
41. I like the location, parking and expansion plan is great. Would like to know what the plans are for the rest of the building
42. Why does the new library need to be four times larger than the current building when we are handling 200,000 plus transients now. This implies 800,000?
43. Would like to see a matrix of site alternatives comparing variables such as cost, parking, space, etc.
44. Are there any other sites not shown on Scott's list in PP that were looked at? Or should be?
45. Yes, we need a new library
46. Staying in downtown area is important
47. Provides ability to partner/collaborate with other community assets – YMCA, Senior Center, Post office, downtown shopping, school/athletics
48. Accessible by bike/walking
49. Provides parking, green space and adequate room for programming
50. Cost is a concern – plan for paying for it
51. Do we need 28-32,000 sq. ft.
52. Evaluate costs to build a new library at this location
53. How does the new library interact with this whole building. Gym, cafeteria, Etc., which would lead to other activities other than library
54. How does it impact the next door residence of the community
55. Keep the green space south of the school
56. There is obviously a need to expand
57. I believe we should recognize the opportunity to have it be such a well-connected facility to other community activities and where people gather
58. We should Applaud Jim Z and others who have brought together the citizens on this building
59. Sustainable
60. I like the idea of tearing down the old section and replacing it with new spaces that library experts can design/shape
61. I am impressed by the amount of work the Library board and the city council have put into this very important community decisions
62. I am very surprised the Library can operate on \$605,000!! How can we help increase their operating budget
63. I think the need for children and teen spaces will only increase and are important in keeping them out of trouble
64. Phase plan between now and completion, pods & trailers for storage or staff offices. Trailer for areas or sections if possible to transition to large space

65. Library middle school a good fit, just needs to be rebuilt? A new building?
Anyway you go it will cost/how will money be raised
66. It has space, parking spaces
67. A good community project for all of us to bring together community spirit
68. Community spirit will ring in private funding for building and maintenance if done properly
69. Present library is squeezed to overflow and probably turning some away as no room to work
70. There is a great need for a larger library up to 32,000 sq. ft.
 - a. Use the gym for YMCA
 - b. Keep newer section
 - c. Tear down oldest section
71. Question to cost of building new to using the newest part for the Library
And the old library for community functions.
72. We definitely need a new library
73. The middle school is a fantastic site
74. It brings young and old together
75. It becomes a gathering place center in our community
76. Also, there is so much potential for other community uses IE – senior center, city offices, united way, 5 loaves and others – good parking/green spaces
77. 11/3 % of what? Total building and operation
78. New library needed but now here? Maybe other options that have not been explored? County Market? Pamida Building?
79. Positive/good idea/excellent location, great gathering place for all ages
80. Middle school belongs to all tax payers and would make a good library
81. If city and towns work together in fundraisers and get grants
82. Great place for all ages
83. A combined library/community center and location is an excellent plan for our city
84. Potential is great for a wonderful center that would bring families/youth/young children and seniors together for a variety of events and interest
85. I will be a strong advocate for the development of this concept – and will gladly help with fund development
86. Green space and “city beautiful” will be enhanced!
87. Revitalization of the “heart of the city”
88. I love the idea of the library being here because more people will enjoy it and it has great location
89. Without a doubt we need a new library: space is an issue as the community grows, programs get busier
90. Love the idea of the middle school as town center with multiple organization working together, working off each other – wow, what a great gathering place
91. Time factor – gotta move forward and make a plan
92. Plan well for expansion, footings for additional stories above
93. Middle school location is best option of all I’ve heard of
94. Building/location already paid for a positive for a new location
95. Central location
96. The site is ideal as far as location
97. According to the number it is necessary
98. The community pride is important in a facility
99. The library is important as a community gathering place

Question # 2 – What specific challenges, issues, opportunities, or concerns do you have regarding the need for a New Library and/or using the Old Middle School Building footprint as the site for a new building.

1. Need for a new library is very important
2. Total costs is very important – plan before fundraising
3. I think for sure we need a new library in this town. I believe the middle school site is a perfect location for the library. I would like to see the library really be something beautiful that captures the pride and beauty of this town. I think we could take it and make it into a truly historical building that celebrates everything this town has to offer
4. I would think the building would need to be two full floors that truly allow for growth and expansion as well as green space and outdoor facilities
5. Something for everyone. Something that pulls the community together
6. NR definitely needs a new library to better accommodate the community and its growth
7. Middle school could be a good location – have other vacant buildings been dismissed (Pamida/Country Market?)
8. I feel that the library should be the hub of the community. River Falls has an excellent library
9. Need outside space for the library
10. We need a new library
11. We need at least 32,000 sq. ft.
12. Library needs to have open space like the River Falls library
13. We need parking for 50-100 cars
14. You need roughly 25 internet places
15. A new library is necessary
16. Middle school is a good location, for a library I.E.” YMCA, downtown, etc.
17. I like the idea of library being connected to the rest of facilities i.e.: senior center
18. I would like to see the new library on the middle school grounds replacing the oldest part of the middle school. There are many positive aspects: Excellent location in downtown area; Close to YMCA; Extra space for meeting rooms e.g. seniors, youth, coffee shop, families parking space; time to plan
19. Use of gym and gathering place
20. great educational opportunities for students to learn in “many ways”
21. Building from scratch allows us to building environmentally friendly
22. A new purpose built building for a community library is a good idea
23. The current middle school location is an ideal spot to build it. This location has enough room to grow wit the community in the future
24. With the number of individuals using the library on a daily basis (500 a day), I feel we are desperately in need of more space. This one works!
25. We need to build with the idea of developing a “green” building so we can take care of future generations
26. We need the 32,000 + square footage that is available here
27. Present building is too old, crowded, limited public use, no parking, staff areas too small.
28. Library not able to provide additional services to “community”
29. Like the idea of “community” being school district area – city and townships
30. Room for expansion needs to be include din new plans

31. Community uses include Boy scouts/girl scouts/family reunions/craft clubs/parent groups/non-profit offices/kids club/community education/rental
32. Keep Friday name on it
33. Collaborative efforts must occur in order to pursue a new building
34. We need to establish knowledge based, plan
35. We need to sell own community on why this is major target
36. It would be helpful to identify and share other collaborative efforts/models
37. Agree we need a new library
38. We need to utilize existing resources, so using the current middle school is a good way to use of existing resources
39. How will it be paid for? Equal township responsibility to help cover the costs?
40. Concern on how to acquire middle school from school to make it into a library. Will we pay for this facility twice?
41. Make sure a plan for the entire facility, not just how to do a library
42. Middle school seems like the perfect location. Though funding is always an issue, this has the potential to be a very rewarding project for years to come
43. I would like to explore more the idea of joining with other communities to not only fund but use the library as an area community project
44. Exciting possibilities exist at the New Richmond middle school location
45. Putting a library adjacent to a high traffic location serving kids/adults/seniors (and YMCA; Senior/senior center; community gathering spaces/rooms for Community Ed, is a win-win-win
46. A new library is long overdue. If negotiations cannot be worked out the library MUST move on – probably as a higher cost with less to offer patrons by not having natural partners
47. The need is there for a library community donation of land good concept
Cost of construction – majority by donations operational costs, by using municipalities per usage – like fire and ambulance in New Richmond

**New Richmond Area Government Entities Network (GEN)
Full Village/Township Board/City Council Meeting**

**Summary Report Submitted by Patrick Overton,
New Richmond Front Porch Project Facilitator**

Monday, July 28, 2008

The Government Entities Network representatives and full Board/Council members met at the Star Prairie Township Town Hall. In addition to the Government Entities Network members the meeting included additional Town/Village Board/City Council/Staff members, Library Board members, and two representatives from the New Richmond Area Community Foundation and one additional representative from the New Richmond School District. In total, there were 34 participants in attendance. The purpose of this meeting was to determine whether or not the Government Entities Network should present a Memorandum of Understanding to the New Richmond School District indicating their intent to create a New Richmond Area Community Library system and requesting their consideration of transferring ownership of the Middle School building in 2011 for construction of the new Library building should this new system be created.

Patrick Overton, Government Entities Network facilitator started the meeting by giving a summary of previous GEN meetings regarding the discussions related to establishing a New Richmond Area Community Library system. He summarized the minutes from the April meeting that established the Government Entities Network and the unanimous agreements that guide the Network in its work over the next one–two years (see Appendix # 1- attached). In addition, he reviewed the questions that were sent into him from the participants prior to the meeting (see Appendix # 2 – attached). He also requested that Jim Counter, President of the New Richmond Area Community Foundation discuss the Foundation’s commitment to this process.

Finally, he discussed some questions related to whether or not a new NR Area Community Library would create a new tax for people in the Townships and Village. He pointed out that the Township and Village citizens currently have a portion of their County tax used to pay for their usage of the Library. He then requested Scott Vrieze, director of the Library, to give the group a short presentation summarizing the Library use and need for a new building. Following this, the group was divided into equal representation at each of the seven tables (five individuals at each table) and requested to address the question: *What are the Issues and Concerns related to establishing a New Richmond Area Community Library system and using the current Middle School site for construction of a new Library building?* The small groups met for 45 minutes to address these issues. The additional issues/concerns were raised during this first small group session including the following:

1. Is it possible to build a second Library building, using the current Friday Memorial Building as an annex?

Plenary Discussion: The discussion focused on whether or not we really needed a new Library building. Some felt that perhaps we should just keep status quo and

leave things the way they are so we don't have to incur additional cost by increasing taxes. Once again, Patrick explained that the Townships and Village citizens currently pay for Library usage so the question isn't whether or not you increase taxes – but rather, are you going to have a Library facility that meets the needs of the area community citizens that use it. And, regarding the statement about keeping things “status quo,” Patrick indicated that the Library is already five years past the point of being out of adequate space and it will be at least another four-five years before a new building could be built. So he indicated that “status-quo” is no longer a possibility. The challenge is to develop strategies to address the space needs of the Library and keep things manageable regarding the cost of a new building and increased cost of operations for a new building.

2. What happens to the Friday Memorial Library building if a new one is built?

This question has been asked from the beginning of the discussions related to a new Library building, whether it is done by the City of New Richmond or it becomes a joint effort. Patrick reported that the community conversation held three months ago raised this issue as well. There was a predominant concern that whatever happens, the current Friday Memorial Library building needs to continue to be used for something related to the community (in this instance, the New Richmond area community) because of a dedicated use clause in the gift from the Friday family requiring that the building be used as a library. Patrick indicated that this issue is being explored to see what options exist for adapted re-use of the building, keeping the intent of the Friday family donation while meeting the needs of the citizens.

3. How are we going to pay for the new Library and the cost of running it?

This discussion focused on the issue of the current way in which the Library budget is covered. Scott Vrieze spent additional time explaining how the current budget is covered. Several members of various Townships/Village expressed confusion and asked to be given the details of how the County Tax they pay breaks down for the Library. Patrick indicated that he would work with Scott to get this information (see attached sheet explaining the current County Tax distribution prepared for this report by Scott Vrieze).

4. Does combining the Library building (on the old Middle School footprint) with other uses in the newer part of the Middle School muddy the water?

There was a lengthy discussion on this issue. There was considerable concern about how the entire Middle School building (the old and the new). The concern focused on the additional costs related to the adaptive re-use of the new building (it is projected that the old building is going to be torn down). Some of the Township/Village representatives expressed concern that they weren't sure they wanted to be responsible for this additional cost (since they are currently not paying for whatever usage the new Middle School building would have. A representative from the City explained the various ways the new Middle School building could be used beyond the Library. There was not a lot of discussion on this question, especially as related to whether or not these additional uses were necessary to meet the needs that exist for a new Library building. It was agreed that it is very important to resolve this matter before a final decision can be made.

5. Are the Government Entities Network representatives buying into sharing the operating costs? If yes, are we going to be involved in making the decisions related to the building design and operational costs - in other words, are we going to be actively involved?

Once again, Patrick explained that the Townships/Village already contribute (partially) to the operational cost of the Library. He made the point that the Library space issues have to be addressed at some point in the future and the reality is likely that the City will have to move forward to build a new Library and the costs are going to go up accordingly. So, the real question is whether or not the Townships/Village want to have input into how this all happens. One person reminded the participants that the Townships/Village/City currently operate a regional Fire and Ambulance system through joint governance and this seems to have worked very well over the years. The thought being, perhaps we should model whatever “regional library system” that is created following the models created in the Fire and Ambulance agreements.

6. From non-city residents, we don’t have a lot of say so in how things are decided as they relate to the current Library system and other services Township/Village citizens use from New Richmond. Are we sure we want to take on that responsibility by jumping into a shared governance system or do we want to continue allowing someone else to make those decisions for us without us having any ownership?

There was lengthy discussion on this question. This question centered on the issue of whether the Townships/Village want to really be involved in regional governance and, if the answer is yes, is everyone clear what this means. It is clear that the citizens of the area community already contribute to the cost of running the Library. Now the question that must be answered is whether or not they really want to have serious ownership of and input into the process of deciding what is done that impacts them.

Following the listing of this last question, the group took a short break. Following the restart of the meeting Patrick asked the group to meet in groups to discuss the following question: “Should we submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on behalf of the Townships/Village/City indicating our interest in creating a New Richmond Area Community Library and requesting the Board’s consideration of transferring ownership of the Middle School once it is vacated in 2011. One person in the group indicated that there was no reason to have this question as it was obvious that nothing is lost by the group submitting this MOU to the School District. Everyone in the group agreed and Patrick put it to a vote resulting in a 33 for and 1 against submitting the MOU. With this very large margin of approval, Patrick indicated that he would summarize the outcomes of this meeting and submit a report to the Government Entities Network for sharing with their Boards/Council persons. He said he would create a draft Memorandum of Understanding reflecting the intent of the group to pursue the Middle School site for a new library building.

Patrick indicated the timeline would be for him to get the report and MOU draft out to the group within the next two weeks. Each of the Townships, the Village, and the City Council need to meet to discuss the outcomes of this meeting and vote to support the MOU. These votes need to be completed no later than September 19th. He indicated that he would ask each of those supporting the MOU in each Government entity to sign the MOU to give clear evidence to the School Board of each Government Entities support. This MOU will be submitted to the School District Board the third week of September. Once this has been done, the Government Entities Network will spend the next 3-4 months answering the questions, finalizing a proposal, and returning to each government entity to gain their support. When this is completed, the final proposal will be submitted to the School District Board with a formal request for transfer of property.

Questions Raised/Sent in Advance of July 28th Government Entities Network

Does the City have an understanding of true COMMUNITY?
Do we all understand the financial responsibility and what it means for all of us?
Are we sure that the Middle School is really the best site?
What do we mean when we use the term “regional” or “community” Library? Does this mean a new structure? Is it a reframing of what exists now? Or is it something else?
Who is going to own the property? Who is going to own the new Library building? Who will own the old Library building?
Who is going to make sure that the Library has the money it needs to function? And, if it is a regional/community Library, what does that mean financially for the City and the Townships/Village?
What do we mean by cultural trust? What is the role of the Foundation in all of this?
Can we really do a “regional/community” system? How?
Where are you getting the money/funding?
What do we do if, after agreeing to move forward, our Township changes its mind and decides not to participate?
Do we have an exit strategy to protect the interest of our citizens
Where are you getting the money/funding?
(our concern rises with the most recent item imposed on the tax payers by the passing of the School Referendum. It was published in the New Richmond News that there would be a \$270.00 dollar increase per a \$200,000 dollar home that was prior to voting on this referendum. The next publication came after the referendum was passed stating that new development was not happening and that now this tax number would double. The point being, with rising utility costs, fuel costs, and now increased tax structures and cost of living in general, it is becoming unattainable for someone on a fixed income to own property and continue to live in St. Croix County. For us to continue to support unplanned for and unsaved monies is no longer acceptable. This will not be passed off as a standard tax increase because something is presented to us that may sound very nice does not mean it’s reachable today or five years from now until the money is in hand.)

Memorandum of Understanding Submitted to
The New Richmond School District Board

***For Consideration of Transferring Ownership of
The Middle School Building for use as a site for Construction of a
New Richmond Area Community Library***

The New Richmond Area Government Entities Network, an informal regional network created through the New Richmond Front Porch Project, is informing the New Richmond School District Board of our intent to explore creating a New Richmond Area Community Library system. In order to consider all possible sites for the construction of a new Library building, we are requesting the School District Board to consider the possibility of transferring ownership of the current Middle School building slated to be vacated in 2011. This transfer would place the building in the ownership of a regional board designed to represent all four Townships, the Village of Star Prairie, and the City of New Richmond.

The Government Entities Network has identified a list of questions we will be addressing over the next few months (please see the attached report of the July 28th meeting of the Network addressing this question). If, once we have answered the questions and agree to pursue the Middle School site as a possible site of construction of a new library building, we will prepare a formal request to the School Board for consideration. With this in mind, we are requesting the School Board to inform the Government Entities Network of your willingness to explore the transfer of ownership of the Middle School property we are requesting in this MOU.

This Memorandum of Understanding was voted on by the following Government Entities Network members (each member of each Board/Council will be asked to sign under their Government Entity name):

Star Prairie Township
Stanton Township
Erin Prairie Township
Richmond Township
Village of Star Prairie
City of New Richmond



School District of New Richmond

701 East 11th Street
New Richmond, Wisconsin 54017
Phone: 715-243-7411 Fax: 715-246-3638
www@newrichmond.k12.wi.us

Memorandum of Understanding

For Consideration of Transferring Ownership of The Middle School Building and Site for use as a Site for Construction Of a New Richmond Area Community Library

The Board of Education of the New Richmond School District respectfully acknowledges and accepts the Memorandums of Understanding it received from members of the New Richmond Area Governmental Entities Network on October 6, 2008.

On October 20, 2008, the Board of Education passed a unanimous motion authorizing the District Administrator to communicate to the membership of the New Richmond Area Governmental Entities Network that they will willingly and enthusiastically consider the transfer of ownership of the Middle School building and site to the membership of the New Richmond Area Governmental Entities Network for use as a site for a New Richmond Area Community Library and other community uses pending the membership working out the details of how those members of the New Richmond Area Governmental Entities Network will work together to use the Middle School Building and site to benefit the citizens of the New Richmond School District.

The Board of Education looks forward to working together with all of the members of the New Richmond Area Governmental Entities Network to assist you in your efforts to build a better community that will benefit all of our citizens.

On Behalf of the Board of Education of the New Richmond School District,

Morrie Veilleux
District Administrator

New Richmond Area Community Government Entities Network

Preliminary Report and Recommendations Regarding Ownership/Use of the New Richmond Middle School Beginning in 2011

Submitted by Patrick Overton

January 5, 2009

Report Introduction

Following four months of data gathering, review, and discussions on the future of the Middle School Building and recommendations by the Government Entities Network to the School District Board, GEN has reached a point where the recommendations you agreed to unanimously “in principle” last April regarding the Library/Middle School ownership need to be finalized (see Appendix #1). These decisions are:

1. What the Government Entities Network recommends to the School District Board regarding what should be done with the Middle School building in 2011 when it is vacated. This recommendation includes usage, ownership, and timeline;
2. Whether or not the Government Entities Network intends to form a Regional Library Board or keep things the way they are with the Townships/Village paying for Library services but having no governance input/authority;
3. What the Townships and Village are going to do to address the 29% shortfall on current and future Library costs and the 29% extra the citizens of New Richmond have been paying as a result.

For purposes of this report and recommendations to the GEN members, these decisions have been placed in priority order. The first decision GEN members need to make is the Middle School building issue. GEN needs to get back to the School Board as soon as possible to honor the timeline you agreed upon in addressing the MOU established with the School Board.

Therefore, this report contains a specific recommendation regarding the ownership of the building after its vacation in 2011 to be discussed and voted on at the January 5th meeting. This decision will then be processed by GEN members during the month and reviewed at the meeting at the end of the month (January 26th). This will then allow a follow-up MOU with the School Board to be written, reviewed by the Chairs/City Council at the January 26th meeting (pending outcome of the decision on January 5th), and then be submitted to the School District Board in February for action and hopefully adoption of these recommendations.

When these discussions began last spring within the Government Entities Network, it was based on the understanding that the new Library would be built on the existing old Middle School footprint and that the remainder of the building would be owned by either the City of New Richmond or by the Government Entities Network, pending outcome of the decisions made by GEN. Within the past few months, it has become apparent that while the City of New Richmond may want some use of the building (in particular, the location of the Library); it does not intend to pursue ownership of the remainder of the building. This leaves the issue of ownership of the remainder of the Middle School to be decided before we can present a final recommendation to the School District Board.

Based on the current economic situation facing all of the Government Entities Network members, it seems unlikely that the Townships and the Village could take on the added cost and/or responsibility of owning, maintaining, and operating the entire Middle School building once it is vacated in 2011. Consequently, based on all of the conversations that have occurred since the July 28th meeting including extensive conversations with Morrie Veilleux, Superintendent of the New Richmond School District, the following recommendation is submitted to the Government Entities Network for consideration:

Recommendation # 1 Have the School District Board Maintain Ownership of the Middle School Building for 3-5 Years following Vacation of the Building in 2011

It is logical that the Richmond School District maintain ownership of the Middle School for a time period of three-five years following vacation of the building (2011-2015). This would probably happen anyway if the Library isn't built there. This could provide a great service to GEN members by providing ownership and oversight of the building for that period of time. In that timeframe, the Government Entities Network (or whatever configuration this group has in the future) and the School District can review future ownership based on evaluation of the programs implemented in the building during this interim period. This recommendation for School District ownership of the Middle School Building includes the following proposed uses of the building;

1. Location of the new library on the Middle School site (either on a temporary or permanent basis) that includes the following possibilities to be explored and decided through joint planning over the next six months:
 - a. *Construction of a new building in the old Middle School footprint;*
 - b. *Renovation of the new Middle School building (the portion north of the old Middle School building) into a permanent library site;*
 - c. *Renovation of a portion of the new Middle School footprint for either temporary use and/or permanent location of the Library with some reduced new construction expansion to the West of the building;*
 - d. *Construction of a new building in front of the north portion of the Middle School;*
2. Location of the School District Community Education Program in the central core area of the building;
3. Creation of cooperative/collaborative programming between the YMCA and the School District Community Education be put in place including the YMCA having access to the Middle School Gym for its programming as well as other shared space activities that include cross-over programming between the YMCA/Community Education/Library;
4. Possible relocation site for the Ambulance District Building as well as possible new hockey field(s) (indoor and/or outdoor) on the south portion of the Middle School land (depending on the final decision regarding the location of the footprint of the new Library building).

Once decisions have been made and programming implemented and evaluated, the School Board and the Government Entities Network can revisit this issue with a recommendation for ownership of the building. In addition, once the decision is made regarding the location/design of the Library on the Middle School site, either a lease will be created for the Library (a 100 year lease for \$1.00) or, the decision can be made to transfer ownership of the Library to the governing body of the Library (either the City or a new Regional Library Board).

It would also be understood if, for some reason during this time period the decision is made to not build the Library on the Middle School site, the School District will seek advice and support from the Townships/Village/City before it takes action to insure all School District constituents have input into and ownership of the decision.

Recommendation # 2 Form a Regional Library Board

During the GEN conversations the past few months, it is clear a decision needs to be finalized regarding whether or not a Regional Library Board is going to be formed. As it stands now, the Townships and the Village are paying, through County tax collection, 71% of their “usage” cost of the Library. This means that each Township and Village is already paying taxes to help operate the Library without any governance responsibility for or input into the process of running the Library. It is logical for the Townships and Village to participate in governance of the Library by forming a new Regional structure.

There are models already in place for the Townships/Village/City to have joint responsibility including the Fire and Ambulance District. An agreement could be reached to form a similar regional board that has governance authority and oversight for the New Richmond Area Community Library.

There are several issues that need to be addressed if you create a Regional Library Board:

1. A decision of this magnitude should be consistent with all Township, Village, and City decision making processes. It is strongly recommended that there be at least one public meeting/community conversation in each of the Village, Townships, and City to give citizens input into the decision;
2. If a decision is made to form a Regional Library Board, then the Government Entities Network needs to design and implement a viable structure for that Board. The Hudson Joint Library model could be used as a starting point for this plan as well as the existing Fire District and Ambulance District inter-governmental agreements;
3. If a decision is made to move forward with a Regional Board, provisions need to be made for full participation in all planning activities for a new Library building including formation of the new nonprofit, building/renovation plans for the structure and transfer of responsibility for Library operations;
4. If a decision is made to move forward with formation of a Regional Board, each of the Townships and the Village will be given the option of whether or not they choose participate in the new Regional Library Board structure. With elections coming up in April, combined with the fact that Richmond is moving from a Board of 3 to 5, a final decision regarding the constitution of a new Regional Library structure might not be made until after April elections.

If a decision is made to form a Regional Board but one or more Townships or the Village choose not to participate in this structure, they will continue to pay their share of the usage cost for the Library but they will not have any input into the operations of the Library, including the decisions made addressing the space needs of the Library. In addition, provisions must be in place in the Articles of Incorporation of the new governance structure to allow a member government entity to withdraw its participation.

If the decision is made not to form a Regional Library Board, the Townships and Village should understand they will have no official governance input into the Library operations, programming, and/or design process for the new Library. While it is strongly recommended that the City continue to use the GEN for effective communication regarding these matters, the City would be free to make whatever decisions it feels is in the best interest of all of the citizens the Library serves.

It should also be understood that if a decision is made not to form a Regional Library Board this does not alleviate the Townships/Village from addressing the situation with the Townships/Village only paying 71% of the cost of their citizens using the Library.

Recommendation # 3 Resolve Township/Village 29% Usage Shortfall

The four Townships and the Village currently pay only 71% of the usage cost for their citizens to use the Library. This amount is set by the County and collected along with the other Township/Village taxes that go to the County for distribution and use. Because there is a 29% shortfall in covering the cost of the Township/Village citizen use of the Library services (as required by State statute); the citizens of the City of New Richmond are covering this additional 29% cost.

There needs to be some resolution to this matter so that the Library, whether it is a Regional Library or a City Library serving the region, has adequate resources to operate and provide resources to the citizens it serves without placing an unfair burden on City residents. There are several strategies that can be employed to address this issue:

1. Invite County representatives to the January 26th meeting of the Government Entities Network and request the County to collect the full 100% of the cost of operations, staffing, and programming of the New Richmond Library, based on usage;
2. If the County won't collect the full 100% or, a decision is made to form a Regional Library, have the Townships/Village pay the full 100% "usage share" of the cost of running the Library. If any Township or the Village chooses not to participate in the Regional Library structure, they should pay the additional 29% of the cost of their citizens using the Library currently not covered by County Tax collection. In the instance of those Townships that have citizen usage of more than one Library, they will continue to cover those usage costs as well (hopefully at the 100% level);
3. Find alternative ways to cover/supplement the 29% currently not covered by the Townships/Village and reduce the additional 29% the City is paying. Among the options being considered include the creation of a permanent "Cultural Trust" that will support the operations of the Library, whether it is a Regional Library or a City Library serving the region.

Report Conclusion

These are the major decisions facing the Government Entities Network at this time. This report and the recommendations contained within it are designed to provide the members of the Government Entities Network with a starting point for your discussion at our meeting on January 5th. Hopefully this will assist Government Entities Network members in creating an effective decision-making process.

The primary purpose of the January 5th will be to finalize the decision on the recommendation regarding the proposed ownership of the Middle School building. It is essential that this decision be made as soon as possible so we can respond to the School Board. While discussion will take place regarding formation of a Regional Library Board and the 29%, a more complete discussion will be held on these two recommendations at the January 26th meeting of GEN.

The meeting next week will also promote the decision-making process regarding formation of a Regional Library structure because it is connected to ownership of the Middle School building. Because of upcoming elections and the need to provide citizens of the various communities to participate in public forms/conversations regarding these recommendations, some government entities might not make a final decision on this recommendation until April or May. This should, however, not prevent the Townships, Village, and City from making the decision as to what direction each intends to go regarding this matter.

Finally, the issue connected to the “29%” shortfall on Township/Village usage costs represents the underlying issues connected to an effective and positive relationship between the Government Entities Network members. As it stands now, the Townships and the Village are paying 71% of their full share of usage cost. Resolving this issue may be the greatest challenge the Government Entities Network faces. The way this shortfall is addressed and, eventually resolved, will provide the necessary groundwork to promote an authentic use of the term *The New Richmond Area Community*.

To gain full buy-in regarding GEN decisions, it is recommended that the January 26th meeting be a full Board/City Council Government Entities Network meeting (the same people who attended the July 28th meeting). This way all of the concerns can be expressed and we can better process the final recommendation that will be submitted to the School District Board.

The Government Entities Network has a lot of work in front of it. But it is clear all of you have made significant progress and the next few meetings should finalize important decisions that will impact the New Richmond area community for years to come.

Memorandum of Understanding

Between the New Richmond Area School District Board of Education And The New Richmond Area Government Entities Network

On January 5, 2009, representatives of the Government Entities Network (GEN) voted unanimously to present to their Boards/Council this recommendation to the Board of Education of the New Richmond Area School District that the School District maintain ownership of the Middle School for 3-5 years following the building being vacated in 2011.

Rationale for Recommendation

Having the School District maintain ownership and oversight of the building for this period of time provides the Government Entities Network and the School District the opportunity to continue to collaborate on possible uses of the building on behalf of the citizens of the New Richmond Area Community.

This recommendation to the School District for maintaining ownership of the Middle School Building includes, but is not limited to, the following potential uses of the building and property currently under consideration;

1. Possible location of the new library including the possibility of renovating space in the new Middle School Building;
2. Possible location of the School District Community Education Program in the central core area of the building;
3. Possible creation of collaborative programming between the Centre and the School District Community Education including use of the Middle School Gym for Centre programming as well as other shared space activities that include cross-over programming between various entities located within the Middle School space to address older adult, youth, and other areas;
4. Possible relocation site for the New Richmond Area Community District Ambulance Building and other uses recommended by the Government Entities Network to maximize the capacity of this site to meet the needs of our citizens.

As plans for these and other potential uses of the building are adopted by the Government Entities Network, they will be submitted to the School District for approval. It also should be noted that other than the operation and maintenance costs associated with the Community Education Program being located in the Middle School building, the entities leasing space within the building will pay for their share of the costs of operation and maintenance of the Middle School building on a pro-rated square foot basis. In addition, any costs associated with renovation of existing Middle School space or construction of new or expanded facilities on Middle School property, as well as any programming costs related to leased space within the Middle School building will be covered entirely by those entities leasing the space.