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New Library Pondered

By MICHAEL GALBREATH
Times Staff Writer

LANSING — There's a good chance Lansing residents will soon no longer take a trip to the Hammond Main Library when a good library is needed.

The Lansing Library Board is planning to build a new building four times the size of its current one.

A referendum is expected this fall to ask taxpayers to pay the bill.

The library at 18206 Chicago Ave. is greatly inadequate, a spokesman says. It has only 30,000 books. The new library, if the referendum is passed, would have space for at least 160,000 volumes.

The library this week received approval from School District 158 to purchase an old school site for \$40,000. The 3.5 acres are on the northwest corner of Indiana Avenue and School Street.

LIBRARY BOARD President Lewis Flom says the board would definitely need a referendum to purchase the land and then build. He adds that for two years the board has been saving for a new structure. He says he has no cost estimates, but the Chicago architectural firm of Y. C. Wong and Associates has been hired.

Flom says the present 15-year old building would be sold. It still hasn't been fully paid for. The library owes \$23,000 on it.

Library associates recommend libraries have 3.5 books per resident. Lansing with 26,000 residents, is far below this.

The board wishes to design its proposed structure so it could serve 45,000 residents. The board a few years ago received information from Mayor Jack O. McNary that 45,000 is the largest Lansing is ever expected to grow.

FLOM SAYS if the referendum is passed, he'd expect to have the new building ready for service within two to three years.

"When the library is completed," he says, "depends on whether the referendum is passed this fall."

The library board under the agreement with the school district, has only 18 months in which to raise money for the project. School District 158 board members, particularly Lawrence McCall, say the library has for too long dragged its feet on the needed new library.

McCall, though approving the 18-month purchase option, wanted to limit it to one year "to get the library board moving."

The library board wanted three full years to buy the land.

McCall told his board Wednesday that the library has been considering purchasing the Indiana Avenue property for two years.

HE SAID, "By the time a new library goes in, they won't be using library books—but microfilm they pop into your head."

Board President Richard DeVries said, "The slowness of the library movement was blamed on the older contingent of it . . . which may or may not be true."

School Board Member Shirley Van Ramshorst added "It'll take 18 months to clean out the old library."

The old library was built for a population of 15,000. It has 10 parking spaces, but four usually are used by staff.

It's undecided whether the new building would be one or two stories high, but additional parking is a must.

The board projects that besides getting room for more books it could increase its periodicals from the present 70 to 200.

The new library would definitely be "very adequate" for many years to come if population projection figures remain true, Flom says.