



To: Council Members, Municipality of the District of Argyle
Cc: Western Counties Regional Library Board
From: René Jeddry, Director of Protective Services
Date: November
Subject: Expression of Interest (EOI) Results – Pubnico Library Location

Background

The Pubnico Library has been located in its current facility, a repurposed church, since 1978. The original structure was constructed in 1899, with additions made at a later, unspecified date. As part of the Municipality's continued commitment to ensuring safe and accessible public spaces, an Expression of Interest (EOI) was issued to explore potential alternative locations for the library. The intent of the EOI was to evaluate the feasibility of either renovating the existing building or relocating the library to a more suitable space.

In October 2024, a building assessment was completed to identify the scope and estimated cost of repairs and upgrades needed at the current site. The study estimated the total cost of necessary improvements at \$164,950 plus HST. Most of the identified issues relate to accessibility deficiencies, which must be addressed to meet the Province of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act goals for 2030.

It is important to note that the assessment did not evaluate the mechanical room, electrical room, or janitor's room. These areas would require professional assessments, as an electrical service upgrade will likely be needed to accommodate planned kitchen improvements, heating and cooling system. Furthermore, the roof, which was not part of the assessment, will require replacement in the near future. Replacement costs could be in the range of \$20,000 or more, depending on the roofing materials selected.

The property also faces site constraints. The lot only accommodates the building footprint, with no owned large parking area. The front parking lot is within the Department of Public Works right-of-way and presents safety concerns due to its proximity to the main road. Additionally, the side parking area used by the public is privately owned and is only available under an informal arrangement, whereby the Municipality maintains and clears it up in exchange for public use.



EOI Submissions

Two proposals were received in response to the Municipality's EOI:

Option 1 – Pubnico Area

1. Available Space: Approximately 2,300 sq. ft.
2. Monthly Rent: \$3,000 (including heat, lights, snow removal, sanding/salting, and general maintenance)
3. Accessibility: Minor renovations required to upgrade washrooms to accessibility standards
4. Parking & Site: Adequate parking available; including outdoor space
5. Additional Information: Building has neighboring tenants and is located along Route 335. The landlord has expressed willingness to work with the Municipality and library, including adding heat pumps or a separate cooling system if needed.

Option 2 – West Pubnico

1. Monthly Rent: \$3,500 (includes heat, cooling, snow removal, and general maintenance)
2. Accessibility: Accessible ramp and washroom upgrade already included (May need to be brought up to 2020 NS Building Code requirements)
3. Parking & Site: Adequate paved parking area; located along the same Route 335.
4. Additional Information: Building includes three heat pumps providing heating and cooling. However, the location is not in the preferred community the library wishes to remain in.

Cost Considerations

Current Facility:

- No rent is paid; however, the Municipality incurs approximately \$26,000 annually in heating, electricity, insurance, and building repair costs.
- The building assessment identified \$164,950 plus HST in required accessibility and building upgrades, with an additional roof replacement estimated at \$20,000 or more in the near future.
- Even after these upgrades, ongoing maintenance and operational costs would remain.
- Expenses for the current location have shown a yearly increase of approximately \$2,000, suggesting operational costs will continue to rise.



Option 1 – Pubnico Area:

- Monthly Rent: \$3,000 (includes heat, lights, snow removal, sanding/salting, and general maintenance).
- Annual Cost: Approximately \$36,000 per year.
- The landlord is willing to cooperate on HVAC upgrades (heat pumps or separate cooling).
- Accessibility: Washroom/accessibility upgrades expected (cost TBD).

Option 2 – West Pubnico:

- Monthly Rent: \$3,500 (includes heat, cooling, snow removal, and general maintenance).
- Annual Cost: Approximately \$42,000 per year.
- The building includes three heat pumps that provide heating and cooling.
- Accessibility: Previous renovations were completed under the old building code; some accessibility requirements have changed since. Accessibility improvements are likely required (cost TBD).

Summary of Key Points

- Both new locations provide adequate parking, with Option 2 offering a paved lot.
- Both options are located along Route 335, maintaining accessibility for the community.
- Moving to either new location would eliminate most ongoing maintenance, heating, and insurance costs associated with the current facility.
- Option 2 includes a more complete accessibility setup and HVAC system, which could reduce future upgrade needs.
- Option 1 is in the preferred community, has outdoor space available, and the landlord has demonstrated a willingness to accommodate additional improvements, making it potentially more aligned with the library's community goals.

Recommendation

Based on cost, accessibility, and community preference, **Option 1 – Pubnico Area** remains the recommended location. Both Option 1 and Option 2 will likely require minor accessibility work to meet current standards; Option 2's earlier renovations were completed under an older code and therefore cannot be assumed to be fully compliant without verification. Option 1 has the advantage of being located in the library's preferred community and benefits from a cooperative landlord willing to support HVAC improvements, which helps reduce uncertainty about upgrade costs and timelines. Financially, Option 1 represents a balanced approach between eliminating the high capital expenditure required for the current building and keeping operating costs lower than Option 2, while preserving community presence.