

Capitola Council continues studying library for Rispin

By DONNA KIMURA
Sentinel staff writer.

CAPITOLA — The idea of turning the old Rispin Mansion into a new public library will be explored further by the City Council, even though an architectural consultant contends the building is not especially suited for that use.

"The one use everyone said, 'Yeah, that will fit our idea of Capitola,' was a library," Mayor Margaret Fabrizio said Thursday. The other council members agreed to study that option further.

A steering committee appointed by the council said the best public use for the vacant building built in 1922 would be a library. A recent feasibility report estimated it would cost about \$3.4 million to create a library there. But library officials said circulation and security would be a problem at the two-story, 22-room mansion.

Fabrizio strongly disagreed.

Old homes have been turned into successful libraries, she said. Fabrizio worked in such a place while attending Linfield College in McMinnville, Ore.

"The community wants to look at alternative ways to operating a library," said Gayle Ortiz, co-chairwoman of the Rispin committee.

A Rispin library was studied on-

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ly in the context of the Santa Cruz City-County Library system, she said.

The building does not suit itself to that model, agreed Councilman Ron Graves, who said he would "kind of like to see to see it as a library."

Other models need to be reviewed, the council decided.

While council members spoke favorably of the library idea, they also weighed an alternative concept: a bed and breakfast inn that the committee said would be the best private use for the site.

The consulting firm, Architectural Resources Group, said it would be possible to create 10 guest rooms and bathrooms at the mansion for about \$2.4 million.

At the suggestion of Vice Mayor

Bob Garcia, they will consider sending out inquiries to developers and inn operators after hearing the community response. A bed-and-breakfast inn might be the only way to restore the mansion, Garcia said.

The city already is surveying residents and business owners for comment before making budget decisions for next year. One question asks people if they have a preference between a library and an inn for the Rispin property.

The city could lease the inn to a private operator while retaining public uses, such as meeting rooms, historic and art exhibit space and gardens.

Councilman Mick Routh told his colleagues they shouldn't shut the door on the idea. It was clear, however, there was less enthusiasm for an inn.

Although the mansion is near the Shadowbrook Restaurant, Fabrizio said she opposed turning the neighborhood into a commercial area.

"I have a hard time supporting a B & B," added Councilwoman Stephanie Harlan.

She said she could see either use, but favored a library, where all the grounds would be open to the public.

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