

WATSONVILLE
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Planning
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Freedom Library planners want to know what you want

Forum at new facility scheduled for Tuesday

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WATSONVILLE — Freedom residents will soon have the chance to inspect their brand-new library facilities, and provide input as to their needs.

An open forum Tuesday evening will allow public comment and discussion on the proposed services and renovations of Watsonville's newest public library, in the recently purchased Pajaro Valley Fire Station at 2021 Freedom Blvd.

The library would like to feature a larger book collection, a reference section, videos, audio cassettes, compact discs, study rooms, a public meeting room, public computer lab and a children's story-time area. "We feel that this location gives us the opportunity to provide a full-service library," Watsonville Library Director Deborah Barrow said. "We would also like to incorporate some sort of display acknowledging the building's former use."

The meeting will be held at the former fire station at 7 p.m. Barrow said the Watsonville Library Board is very interested in hearing comments from the community about what is needed in the way of service, programs and renovation of the building.

By moving the library from its current location at 25 Holly Drive on the Freedom School premises, the library will expand from its present 980 square feet to approximately 4,000 square feet.

According to Barrow, the Pajaro Valley Fire

District has been working on the sale for over a year, along with Assistant City Manager/Fire Chief Gary Smith. Barrow said she has had her eye on the property for a year as well. "I am excited about being able to offer service in a location in that area that is very convenient. We anticipate that the use of a library from that facility would increase dramatically. Our current building on the Freedom school grounds is so small and difficult to find it is not used as much as a library if a more convenient location would be," Barrow said.

The actual renovation can go forward at any time as all the paperwork is done and escrow has been closed on the property, but Barrow said they are waiting to hear from the community first. A previously scheduled public forum was postponed during the recent flooding and subsequent evacuations.

The station became unneeded when fire protection services were contracted to the Watsonville Fire Department following the city's annexation of the area in 1996. Currently the area is served by the Watsonville's fire station a few blocks away on Airport Boulevard. That leaves only the Salsipuedes station remaining within the Pajaro Valley Fire District but plans are under-way to create a second one.

Funding for the purchase and renovation of the building is provided through proceeds of the one-quarter cent sales tax measure which was passed by voters in Santa Cruz County in the November 1996 elections.



Tarmo Hannula

Joan Peros (left), chairwoman of the board of the Pajaro Valley Fire District, hands over the keys to the old fire department at the corner of Airport and Freedom boulevards to library director Deborah Barrow.