



For Immediate Release

The Site Committee of the Pike County Public Library has recommended, and the Library Board has voted to enter into discussions for, the purchase of the Biondo Foundation building at 221 Broad St. as the location for a new Milford library. The Site Committee reached its recommendation unanimously, following six months of careful review and due diligence on five possible options for a new Milford library facility. A condition of the Dorothy Warner gift which “jump-started” the new library campaign was that the new building be located in Milford Borough. Grants already obtained by the PCPL also are premised on a facility that will help to revitalize downtown Milford.

Rebecca Lindsey, Chair of the Site Committee, said “In a nutshell, the Biondo building offers the most useful library space for the least money. Besides the private donations that we have raised, our main sources of funds are two state grants that we must use by next year if we are going to use them at all. We will of course have to amend our grant applications to change the use of the grants from construction of the Frederick Schwartz design to renovation of an existing building, but preliminary discussions with the granting agencies about this option have been positive. Most importantly, we believe that we could purchase and renovate the Biondo building within the budget allowed by our existing funds, without incurring debt that would increase PCPL operating costs. The other possibility—new construction on our Harford St. site—is too expensive.”

The Biondo building would provide the PCPL with about 9000 square feet of usable space, versus 2500 in the current building owned by the Community House. Inspections to date have confirmed that the HVAC, septic, and elevator systems are in good shape. All three units of the HVAC have been replaced in the last 5- 7 ½ years. Parking for the building is available at the rear of the lot, where there is space for 5 handicapped/senior citizen parking spaces, and on a separate lot with space to park 24 cars, which is part of the property offered. The parking lot is located 120 feet from the building lot, down either Pear Alley or Ann St. Milford Borough officials have confirmed plans to repair the section of Pear Alley between the parking lot and the Biondo building in the near future. The tenants and staff of the Biondo building used about 30 parking spaces all day every day before the Biondo building was vacated; it is anticipated that library staff and patrons would generally require fewer spaces than that at any one time.

The PCPL’s Site Committee has obtained detailed cost estimates for each element of the renovations expected to be needed at the Biondo building, and has also had preliminary floor plans drawn showing how the interior space could be divided into each of the necessary project spaces identified by the PCPL’s professional library planning consultant. Those floor plans are attached.

On March 1, the Site Committee appeared before the Milford Borough Council to discuss with the Council the five locations it was then considering. At that meeting the Borough Council asked Bob DiLorenzo, Milford Zoning officer and SEO, to review the five possibilities. Mr. DiLorenzo's report to the Site Committee did not identify any major zoning or septic issues with the Biondo building. A public library is a Class One Conditional use under the Milford Zoning Ordinance.

A major factor affecting the Site Committee's deliberations is the requirement in both of the state grants obtained by the PCPL that all construction work over a minimum threshold be performed at prevailing wage rates. As a result, construction costs for a new building are estimated at approximately \$250 per square foot. Available funds would permit the construction of perhaps 4000 square feet of new space, which PCPL's Library Director has indicated is not adequate. Renovation costs for the 9000 square foot Biondo building, even at prevailing wage rates, are substantially lower than \$250 per square foot.

Finally, while a new Milford library is next, the PCPL is committed to expanding services as quickly as possible to other parts of Pike county. Thus the Site Committee has tried to avoid any Milford option that would require additional fundraising: any such option would not only take more time to complete, but would also reduce donor and grant funds that might otherwise be available for operations or for new libraries elsewhere in Pike county. The Site Committee recognizes that the Biondo building will not make a perfect library: it is on three floors, and its parking lot is 120 feet down an alley. However, the masonry building is low-maintenance, relatively new, in good condition, and easy to renovate. Given the PCPL's present circumstances, the Site Committee strongly believes that the PCPL Board should proceed to execute a contract for the purchase of the building, contingent on (1) a building inspection, (2) obtaining all necessary permits, and (3) obtaining sufficient grant funding to complete the project, debt free and with adequate reserves to pay the increase in operating costs for the first two years.

The Biondo Foundation has kindly offered to host an "Open House" at the Biondo Building on Saturday, June 5, from 9 am-noon. Any member of the public interested in walking through the building is welcome to do so at that time. The floor plans for potential renovation of the interior space will be displayed at the Open House so that people may see how the space could be adapted for library uses.

The Pike County Public Library will also host a public meeting on Tuesday June 29 at 7 pm at the County Courthouse. All interested citizens and library patrons are invited to ask questions, provide input, and hear a short presentation about the bases for the Site Committee's recommendation.