

COMMUNITY

Library architects design plan to get info to community

Residents speak directly to architects about expansion project

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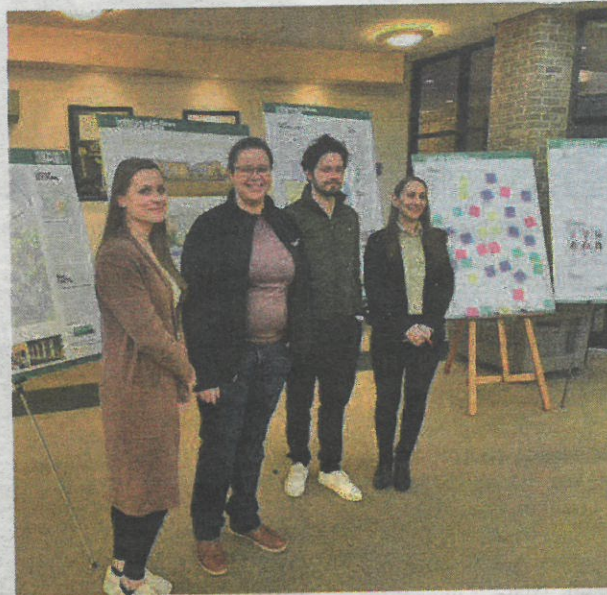
DELMAR - On April 10, representatives from Ashley McGraw, the outside architectural firm hired to redesign and renovate Bethlehem's Town Library, held a seven hour "Talk to the Architect" session at the Library. During the community outreach opportunity, about 50 Town residents stopped to ask questions or voiced their concerns about the Library project. Alternatively, event attendees could leave anonymous post-it note comments on a white board.

"We thought this was a good way to get information out there and if there are comments or concerns that have not yet been addressed, we want

to know about them," said firm principal Susanne Angarano. The event also featured images of the proposed project.

"We're hearing a lot of excitement about the opportunities for kids and teens," said Angarano. "The most common comments have been 'it's a long time coming' and 'it's about time.'" She was joined by interior designer Brooke Williams and Architectural Designers Danisley Jayson and Carlos Cardones.

Jayson said parents are particularly excited about the flexibility of seating



and more spaces for kids. "There's also a lot of love for the community rooms," she added.

Originally, Library expansion and renovation costs were projected at \$28 million. After agreeing in January to certain building design changes and upgrades, the Library's board of trustees approved an increased cost cap of \$35 million and bond referendum, not exceeding \$32 million. Those renovations include expanding spaces, improving accessibility, asbestos remediation and shifting the library's main entrance to the garage's current location.

The increased costs were mostly attributable to adding \$3.3 million to modernize the building with a round-source/ geothermal HVAC system. Angarano noted that patrons were excited about the geo-thermal system. One attendee even left a post-it note stating, "A

BIG YES to Geothermal." Another suggested extending geo-thermal beyond the Library to Town Hall.

Not everyone appreciated the additional expense. Angarano said they also received questions about how the cost and whether less costly alternatives had been considered. She said the board weighed the pros and cons of value versus the need to cap expenses. "Now the call is to us to stay within that cap," Angarano said.

Another feedback session, this time with board members and staff, as well as the architects will be held at the Library on Tuesday May 7 at 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Voters will decide in October whether to approve the project. "We just want to make sure people know what the facts are so they can formulate their own informed opinion," said Angarano.