Library group hears plans, learns about lack of money

By Jack Elder

The Friends of the Manitou Springs Community Library met on Wednesday, Feb. 13, and heard member Matt Cavanaugh describe the status of the plans for the library's long-sought expansion. Many who were present also learned for the first time that approximately $250,000 which many believed had been set aside for the library's expansion was no longer available.

The city of Manitou Springs owns the library's building, an original, historic Andrew Carnegie Library. The library operation is part of the Pikes Peak Library District and is not funded by the city.

Cavanaugh's remarks concerned the library's expansion. The discussion concerning the quarter of a million dollars came up after his remarks and the meeting was breaking up.

Architectural plans call for a large two-story addition to the building on its southwest side. Making the entire facility compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act is part of the plan.

"It's the only library for miles and miles that's not ADA-compliant," Cavanaugh said.

He said that the existing library is too small for wheelchairs. He described an elderly woman's attempts to navigate the 20 or so steps leading from the outside to the main floor and a toddler's struggles in the restroom.

Cavanaugh pointed out that the project's architect had also prepared the plans from which the Salida library was made ADA-compliant.

"The library's current state is intolerable," Cavanaugh said.

Cavanaugh told the audience that the expansion was estimated to cost $2.1 million two years ago and that it would probably be closer to $2.5 million today.

Some in the audience advocated seeking grants for the necessary funds. Cavanaugh said he felt that would take too much time, although he did feel that it might be easier if the city called the expansion a capital improvement.

The undesignated funds went into the city's general fund, as confirmed later by Finance Director Rebecca Davis in a memo response to Mayor Ken Jaray. Davis said the gift was Colorado Springs property that the city sold in 2015.

The money going to the library "was always our intention," former Mayor Marc Snyder later told the Bulletin. Snyder added that the city was in difficult financial straits at the time and that trust money, he believed, had paid for the architectural study.

Snyder said that the gift to the city was contained in Jaynes' will, adding that obtaining the gift from the family had been difficult and had not been far from going to court. He emphasized that the will specified the city only, not the library.

In any event, the city has earmarked $50,000 for library expansion in the current budget and has designated no other money for the expansion at this time.

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— Matt Cavanaugh