



Responses to
some frequently
asked questions
about the proposed
Holmen Area
Library relocation:

Q. What are we being asked to do?

A. Voters in the Village of Holmen, Town of Holland and Town of Onalaska will be asked to express their support for a referendum question on the April 3, 2007 ballot, approving their municipality's participation in acquiring a site for the relocation and expansion of the Holmen Area Library. The site in question is the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church at 515 N. Main Street in Holmen. The precise referendum wording is currently being drafted – it will be the same except for municipality's name and a dollar amount proportional to that municipality's property tax base. The referendum will likely read something like this:

"Are you in favor of the (insert municipality name here) paying a portion of the \$2,000,000 purchase price of the St. Elizabeth Church property located at 515 N. Main Street in Holmen, for the purpose of relocating the Holmen Area Library from its current location, provided that the cost to the (insert Town/Village) does not exceed (\$460,000 on the Town of Holland ballot / \$760,000 on the Village of Holmen ballot / \$780,000 on the Town of Onalaska ballot) plus expenses, and the remaining cost is paid by the (insert name of the other two municipalities here) in proportion to their respective 2006 equalized valuations?"

Q. How would the municipalities share the purchase cost for St. Elizabeth's building and land?

A. The current recommendation is to use "Equalized Valuation" for the basis of cost sharing during the life of the loan, which is thought to be the most equitable method for all area residents. Shared funding assures shared governance in terms of policies, operations and access for all residents of our three municipalities. Under a shared governance arrangement, a Library Board would likely be structured and operate similar to the long standing Fire Department Board. Operating costs would be shared through a similar "Equalized Valuation" formula.

Each municipality's governing board would determine the financing method for payment of their share. For example, bonding may be determined to be most appropriate and least expensive. Each board would finalize details as to the bonding terms, length of issue, interest rates, and repayment schedule.

Q. Why do we need a larger and better public library?

A. This library serves Holmen, the Town of Holland and the Town of Onalaska. Since the library moved to this location in 1988, village population has more than doubled to 7,337 by 2006. Meanwhile, the townships' combined populations grew to 8,790 in 2006 and are anticipating substantial additional growth in the years just ahead.

📖 State standards say a library for this size area should be 16,000-sq. ft.

📖 The Holmen Area Library currently has 4,500-sq. ft.

📖 Circulation at the current facility in 2006 was 85,288, a 3% increase over 2005.

Children's reading programs have limited space and families are being turned away. The Holmen Area Library's available space is no longer adequate. Collections (books, periodicals, audiovisual, etc.) are overflowing. Aisles are narrow, making access difficult. Computer stations are overtaxed. Parking is limited – both off-street and on. Programming space for children, young adults and adults is severely overcrowded. High traffic volume means there are too few seating areas for quiet reading, study or research. Lighting is substandard. Work and storage space for library staff and volunteers is nearly non-existent. Built in the 1950's as a grocery store, this aging structure has roofing, moisture and other structural concerns, as well as higher operating costs due to heating and cooling inefficiencies.

Q. What alternatives have been explored?

A. The following possibilities have been carefully considered:

- (1) Expand the current structure: This isn't feasible because the site isn't large enough at approximately 1/3 acre. Any building addition at this site would be too small and would eliminate any off-street parking.
- (2) Purchase / renovate an existing building: Many possibilities were explored – here are two examples: Space at Holmen Square Mall was carefully evaluated, but for a variety of reasons this alternative lacked support and was available for a limited time only. Warehouse buildings owned by King Furniture were also considered. The location was a concern, the site was too small (about 1 acre) with parking problems and prohibitive costs for necessary demolition and reconstruction. Other site possibilities were explored along the Highway 35 corridor, Holmen Industrial Park, near Park Bank, and on McHugh Road, among others. In each case, the prospective site was either too small, much too expensive, or had other serious potential setbacks. More details are available on these site explorations.
- (3) Purchase a site and build a new library: Unfortunately, there is very little available commercial land that is centrally-located, large enough and realistically priced. Construction cost estimates from two area architectural and engineering firms ranged from \$3.5 million and \$3.8 million for a library comparable in size to St. Elizabeth's Church after remodeling – not including site purchase costs.

Q. Why is location so important?

A. The ultimate success of any library facility is measured in usage of services. A library should be located close to where people go to conduct business and situated on a major street with easy access by walking, biking and auto, along with adequate parking. It should be a safe and accessible after-school destination for students, as well as a compatible link between neighborhoods, schools, churches, retail shops and related businesses.

Q. What are the site requirements?

A. The site should be large enough to accommodate a one-story building with adequate off-street parking for users and staff. State standards recommend a site size of four acres for a 16,000-sq. ft. facility. The site should also have room for future expansion. Having all utilities and services already in place would be most cost-effective and a major plus.

Q. What appears to be the best choice?

A. Purchase the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church and property – located at 515 North Main Street in Holmen. The Diocese of La Crosse has set a firm sale price of \$2 million, based on appraisals they obtained in 2005. The purchase would be funded by taxpayers of the Village of Holmen, Town of Onalaska and Town of Holland in a fair and equitable manner. The Friends of the Holmen Library have pledged to raise at least \$2 million in private donor contributions through a capital building campaign – for conversion of the building to library use, including improvements, renovations and increased capacity. ***It is interesting to note that the church cost \$1 million to build in 1985 – equivalent to \$2.1 million in today's dollars.***

Q. What's included in St. Elizabeth's purchase price?

A. It includes the main church building, all accessory buildings, current paved parking lots, existing landscaping, all on site utilities, and about 6.5 acres of land. The church building provides about 11,500sq feet of finished space on the main floor. There is no 2nd floor or basement. Moveable furnishings and church related items would need to be detailed in a sale contract agreement. ***The church site meets selection criteria:***

- 📖 Close to the center of the Towns of Holland and Onalaska, and Village of Holmen.
- 📖 Increases total library space from today's 4,500-sq. ft. to 16,000-sq. ft. (remodeled).
- 📖 Fully accessible in compliance with ADA requirements.
- 📖 Utilities and services installed – sewer, water, curb, gutter, gas, electric, phone, etc.
- 📖 Room for future library expansion if needed.
- 📖 Preserves tax base by using non-taxable property for another non-taxable purpose.
- 📖 Near schools, retail and other businesses – accessible by walking, biking or auto.
- 📖 140 plus parking spaces in an existing asphalt parking lot.
- 📖 Overall high quality building architecture, infrastructure, appearance and setting.
- 📖 Compatibility with existing neighborhood and a good fit with future land use.

Q. What would be the citizen’s tax impact in the three municipalities?

A. The committee asked for professional assistance to determine the tax impact based on a 15-year bond at 6%. A \$200,000 home would pay an additional \$3 a month for access to a fully equipped library.

Q. What will the operating costs be and how will they be paid?

A. The committee has current utility costs for St. Elizabeth’s. They are in the process of estimating a cost with the new occupancy. Other maintenance and operation costs i.e. cleaning, mowing, snow removal, will be determined by the municipalities. The lease payment from the county for office space (currently \$17,000) will offset maintenance and operation costs.

Q. Who has been working on this?

A. The Friends of the Holmen Library is a group of concerned citizens who organized for the purpose of creating a larger and better library for the Holmen area. They have sought input from area residents and met frequently with municipal leaders. An overwhelming majority of respondents have said they feel the current library is too small and that they favor an April ballot question on a jointly owned and operated Holmen Area Library.

All three governing boards in the Village of Holmen, Town of Holland and Town of Onalaska have been supportive of a larger library. They have taken action to include a referendum question on the April 2007 ballot so that voters will have a chance to express their support for this project.

Q. Who can I contact for more information?

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| • Roxanne Reynolds | 526-5871 | roxannereynolds@centurytel.net |
| • Barry Ploessl | 526-9364 | ploessl@mailaka.net |
| • Chuck Olson | 526-5555 | chuckolson@remax.net |
| • Lloyd Dresen | 526-4643 | |
| • Pat Stephens | 785-8153 | patstephens@charter.net |

Questions about the referendum?

Public Informational Meetings
Sponsored by the Friends of the Holmen Area Library

Thursday, March 22nd, 6:30 p.m. at the Holmen Library – 103 State Street, Holmen

Tuesday, March 27th, 7:00 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Church – 515 Main Street – Holmen

Monday, April 2nd, 7:00 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Church – 515 Main Street – Holmen

Tours of the current library will be given from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. prior to the March 27th and April 2nd meetings.