

Scenic Regional updates plan for new Hermann branch

Ray Scherer

The Scenic Regional Library system continues to lay the groundwork for a \$1.4 to \$1.5 million relocation of its Hermann branch.

Steve Campbell, Scenic Regional's executive director, reviewed the plans on Thursday for the Gasconade County Commission. System officials earlier this year announced the intention to relocate the Hermann branch from its current location at 601 Market St. to the former Alco department store in the Bavarian Hills Plaza.

Campbell told the commission design work for the new branch has just begun. He said it's hoped the proceeds from the sale of two library properties in Union can help finance the work in Hermann. Other funds in the system's budget will be set aside for the project. He said 35 to 40 percent of the available space at the Alco building will be devoted to the library, with the renovations there probably starting next summer after a groundbreaking in the spring. It's hoped the new branch can open sometime in early 2022, which Campbell said happens to be the anniversary of when Hermann joined the system. This will be the last branch in the system to undergo renovations that have extended back to 2016.

A public art gallery will be created, along with a patio, study rooms, fireplace -- all reminiscent of design features at other Scenic Regional branches, said Campbell. The planning will probably translate into close to 8,000 square feet for the library, which will make it slightly larger than the Owensville branch. Mold in the building will be mitigated. About 13,000 square feet will remain for rental prospects.

"I would like to get one good-sized tenant in there," he said.

In other parts of his report to the commissioners, Campbell said Scenic Regional still offers curbside item pickup services, although there are not many users, in light of the ongoing pandemic. YouTube is being utilized to present children's programming.

"We're getting by," he said, referencing impacts of the coronavirus. There are no plans to hire new personnel. Campbell said about \$13,000 has been spent on COVID-19 precautions -- such as plexiglass shields. The Hermann branch has also been involved in offering notary services for those residents who have chosen to mail in their General Election ballots.