

New library stays in North Beach

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Prince Frederick, MD - After having their first proposal fall through when a land deal was negated, the Town of North Beach nevertheless prevailed with their newest plan for providing a location for the new Twin Beaches Branch of Calvert Library. During the Tuesday, Dec. 11 meeting of the Calvert County Commissioners Calvert Board of Library Trustees President Martha Grahame announced the panel had chosen North Beach's 5th Street location as the site for the new facility. Grahame confirmed that BOLT had met earlier in the morning to finalize their recommendation. The BOLT president indicated the decision was based on a point system that took several aspects into consideration and the North Beach location was deemed "the most compatible with library activities." The Town of Chesapeake Beach—where the current Twin Beach branch is located—had presented two parcels for consideration.

The county commissioners, in one of the last acts by the current board, unanimously accepted BOLT's recommendation. "I know it's a difficult task, two great towns," said Commissioners' President Evan K. Slaughenhaupt Jr. [R-District 3]. As Slaughenhaupt offered congratulations to North Beach Mayor Mike Benton, Chesapeake Beach Mayor Pat "Irish" Mahoney offered his well-wishes by applauding.

Back in May, the commissioners okayed BOLT's original recommendation for a tract on Route 261 (Chesapeake Avenue) in North Beach. When the town's land deal for the parcel collapsed at the 11th hour BOLT decided to reopen the proposal process.

"The property is sufficient to allow the library to build a single-story 16,000 square foot facility, storm water structures, devices and areas," stated former North Beach Mayor Mark Frazer in a letter to BOLT, dated Oct. 29, regarding the town's newly recommended parcel. "While we understand this recommendation comes from your consultant's report, such a building on the proposed property would reduce the number of available parking spaces and the Council feels there are better uses of the valuable land at this location. In recent years, North Beach has experienced the construction of numerous multi-story buildings because of the limited land area available for development within the town. Not only would a one-story building appear out of place at this location, we believe a multi-story building would offer the potential for more aesthetically-pleasing architectural features. It is our understanding that the 'pure' library functions can be performed in a building with a 12,000-square foot first floor. Auxiliary requirements such as meeting space, storage and administrative offices can easily be located on the upper level."

The Calvert County Government's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) identifies the estimated cost of the Twin Beach Library Branch project as \$7.9 million. According to Grahame, Calvert Library applied for a \$2.3 million State Capital Grant for funding in fiscal years 2020 through 2022, "rendering a fiscal impact of \$5.6 million to the county if those grants are approved in full."

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