

Library/ from A1

Library Director Sarah Adams said that would cost the owner of a \$100,000 home roughly \$71 per year in additional property taxes.

Council Member Laura Graf immediately worried at Tuesday's City Council meeting that the average homeowner couldn't afford such a steep increase.

Fellow Council member Dick Pufall then asked City Administrator Brant Kucera if residents could cover the cost.

"In my mind, there's no doubt. If you look at the value the taxpayer would receive for the amount of additional taxes, this is very justifiable. Seventy-one dollars a year is extremely affordable," he said.

Council members could act to approve the bond sale without seeking input from residents. A resident could force a referendum on the matter by collecting signatures from 10% of the people who voted in the last governor's race, Kucera said — about 337 signatures, Ashland Election Specialist Kevin Hass said.



TOM STANKARD/STAFF PHOTO

Patrons relax in one of the library's public areas.

The city has other options to cover the library repairs, Kucera said. It could follow the same path it did when it built the new \$4.65 million police station. To fund that project, council members narrowly voted to seek a 10-year loan including about \$814,000 in interest with a balloon payment at the end of the term.

If the city were to borrow money for the project, Council member Kevin Seefeldt asked if it would hurt the city's borrowing power in the future.

"Yes, is the answer," Kucera said.

The city's last capital investment in the library building was in the early 1980s, creating space for an elevator, shifting the entrance to Vaughn Avenue, reducing the size of the children's area, enclosing a stairway connecting the first and second floors and adding a series of small rooms to accommodate the Historical Museum on the second floor. The intervening 40 years have taken a toll, Adams said.

The \$4 million would help fund the first phase of renovations that Adams said would essentially cover everything necessary to make the building a modern operating library, addressing code compliance, introducing energy efficiencies, waterproofing the foundation, adding fire protection, electrical service upgrades, tuck-pointing and window replacement.

It would be the first of

three phases of renovations. Whether there will be a phase two of the renovation is still up in the air. If things do move forward, plans could include multiple additions to transform it into a bright, responsive public place for generations, Adams said, fulfilling the vision founders Samuel and Emeline Vaughn had for the library.

The list of improvements could include adding an entrance on Main Street, an open staircase connecting the first and second floors, dedicated spaces for children and teens, collections on both floors, more natural light through more windows, more seating and a large community room available for public use. Those upgrades would cost another \$3 million.

A resolution supporting the renovation project was approved to be brought before council. It said, "a revitalized Vaughn Building is an essential part of re-making downtown into a play, work, stay space attractive to all generations and one of the priorities of Ashland's comprehensive plan."

Chicks/ from A1

"Finally, on June 2, one baby was breaking out of its shell," she said. "But that was a Friday, so I couldn't check again until Monday. And on Monday the fifth, all the eggs had hatched over the weekend."

The next important step in the baby birds' lives will come June 22, when raptor researchers will band the chicks to help track them during their adult lives, and assign them names generated by Ashland School District students and determined by Daily Press readers.

The nesting box meant to attract peregrines — the once-endangered birds that are the fastest animals on earth — has hosted several pairs of parents since 2014. The most recent have been Penny, who hatched in 2020 atop a factory in Manitowoc, and Peter, whose origins are unknown.

"They're very, very aggressive this year," Hall said. "They're whizzing by my head very close and they're very vocal — squawking at me a lot. I've looked in the box twice since they were born and got away real quick."

Every visit has been harrowing. To get a glimpse of the chicks, Hall must climb a ladder inside the building that houses Xcel's boiler No. 5, then crawl through a hatch on the roof about eight feet from the nesting box.

"As soon as they hear me crawling up the ladder, they know I'm coming and when I open the hatch they're just on me," she said. "I quickly run over and look in to make sure the chicks are all OK. I'm armed with my helmet but I should be my broom. I will from now on because they're just so aggressive."

Waving a broom in the air over her head gives her some protection from the parents, who scream and dive-bomb to protect their chicks.



PETER J. WASSON/STAFF PHOTO

Xcel's Lynn Hall and other employees have named chicks hatched at the plant since 2014. This year, they are handing off that duty to local students.

They've also been caring for the chicks in other ways.

"They've been hunting," Hall said. "The dad has been on its power line and I can see him in the morning on his plucking station getting his morning catch ready. I haven't seen him grab anything from the air but I do see him most mornings with his catch."

Once their prey — usually pigeons that flock around the power plant — has been plucked, the parents rip it apart and feed the pieces to the growing chicks.

"They're huddled in a little ball to keep warm, and mom and dad are feeding them and protecting them," Hall said. "But you just see a big ball of white fur at this point."

When the chicks are banded, Amy Ries of the Raptor Resource Project will try to determine their gender based upon their size — females tend to be bigger than males. Then they will be given names from the list submitted by students and voted on by readers.

"I liked Poppy for a girl, and I loved Dash and Jet," Hall said.

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TOM STANKARD/STAFF PHOTO

A Vaughn Public Library staff member shelves a book. Library officials said the building, last updated 40 years ago, needs waterproofing, electrical upgrades, window and brick repairs and more to bring it up to code and modernize it.

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John Hogan and Becky Lewandowski were married June 13, 1973 in Ashland, WI.

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Wishing John and Becky a wonderful anniversary and many more to come!



What would have been 40 years ended in 5 because you are no longer alive. Even though we're apart, you still live in my heart!

Wife, Janell - 6/18/83