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## Residents speak up for the Grand Forks Public Library

*Marilyn Hagerty*

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Rich Harris has lived in Grand Forks since 2001, and he thinks the Public Library is a great facility. It's a wonderful sight, he said, to see a child reading a book.

He was one of several people who accepted the invitation Thursday night to "Speak Up for Your Library."

Harris told the task committee exploring the future of the library that he would like to see an investment in technology. But, he said, "I hope you never forget those wonderful things called books."

Others voiced concerns about the location of the library, duplication of services within the city and how a new library would be funded.

Laurie Hollifield, a Latin teacher in the city high schools, said the Grand Forks Library is a success story that now needs to be rewritten. She brought viewpoints of her students. And she said it is appalling to see highly overworked and dedicated staff members working in cramped quarters. Hollifield and others talked of libraries in other cities and encouraged looking around.

A former City Council member, Ann Sande, said, "I think this library can use technology and use people to do other things." She talked about technology in the library at Scottsdale, Ariz., that allows her to check out her own books and sign herself up to use computers. And she said, "There is so little space to hold on to the older books in the Grand Forks Library."

Mike Lukes describes himself as a heavy user of the library. But he says even the people who don't use it benefit from the spinoff. "You have to attract people," he said. He suggested the need for transportation to bring them in and possibly an auditorium for speakers.

Terry Bjerke of the Grand Forks City Council said he was neutral on the question of building a new library. But, he said, "I am a nuts and bolts guy. I feel an obligation to make sure of how we are spending people's money." He suggested periodicals might be available on the Internet rather than purchased. He asked if the purpose of the library was to be a gaming center for people using computers. He wondered if they could use their own laptops.

"I think," Bjerke said, "this group needs to sit down with the Park District and the School District.

Erik Fritzell, a retired Oregon State University professor, described the vibrant, exciting program at the library in Corvallis, Ore. He thinks the current library location is very central and suggested incorporation of some meeting rooms.

People who spoke generally agreed the library is a treasure and that something needs to be done to make repairs and bring it up to date or replace and relocate.

James Hovey, president of the task force, said representatives of the Fargo Library will answer questions at the next meeting Dec. 11. The Fargo library is in the final phase of replacement.

Before the meeting closed, Jo Anne Gorman, a former president of Friends of the Library, asked, "If we do nothing, we will have to spend millions of dollars on repairs and parking?"

Hovey indicated that was correct. Gorman said, "I think great things are going to happen here. We need to get cracking."

*Reach Hagerty at [mhagerty@gfherald.com](mailto:mhagerty@gfherald.com) or by telephone at (701) 772-1055.*