

METRO/STATE

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Wednesday, January 17, 2007

Unstable soil adds to costs of library plot

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Fargo's downtown library project will cost up to half a million dollars more because of unstable soil discovered around the existing library, members of the Library Board were told Tuesday.

The new library will use the foundation and support columns of the existing library at 102 3rd St. N. About 20 feet of space also is being added to the north and east sides.

Soil tests revealed that the ground isn't stable enough to guarantee the expansion area won't shift out of alignment with the existing building, Interim Library Director Beth Postema said.

To fix the problem, 65 support columns, known as caissons, must be pounded 120 feet into the ground until they hit firm glacial deposits, she said.

In addition to the Red River Valley's shifty clay soils, another problem is that the library was built on an urban renewal site, Postema said. The site used to support a metal foundry, and some equipment was buried rather than removed, she said.

The estimated cost of the

foundation work is \$400,000 to \$500,000, Postema said. The expense wasn't anticipated in the project budget, she said.

City Commissioner Linda Coates said the city is considering bonding to provide "bridge funding" for the project until private pledges are received to cover the cost.

Board members also hope construction bids, slated to be opened in late February, will be below the estimated construction cost of \$9.9 million.

"I don't think this is cause for alarm. I think when we're talking about an issue like this, in a region like this for building, it's not necessarily unexpected," Coates said.

Postema also informed the board that asbestos abatement in the existing library will cost about \$100,000, which is more than anticipated.

A fundraising campaign has raised about \$1.25 million for the main library project and new north and south branch libraries, she said.

An 18-month, half-cent sales tax generated nearly \$13 million for the three libraries before expiring June 30.

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