

## Land exchange offers options for Middletown library project

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson  
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MIDDLETOWN &dash; Building a library for Middletown may be a step closer to reality, thanks to a recent decision by the Board of Supervisors to consider a land exchange.

Middletown Unified School District Superintendent Korby Olson went to the board last week to formally express the district's interest in acquiring a county-owned parcel on Big Canyon Road to combine with part of another property to create a 10-acre school site.

The county's original plan was to build a library at the Big Canyon site. Olson suggested a sale or exchange of land the school district owns in town, which in turn could be used for a new Middletown library.

The Loconoma property is located in the center of town, one block east of Highway 29, and currently is the location of a continuation school, said Olson.

Supervisor Ed Robey and county Chief Administrative Officer Kelly Cox have met with the school district's consultant on the purchase.

&ldquo;I really see this as a win-win proposition, both for the school district and the county,&rdquo; said Robey.

Cox said county staff wanted to know if the board approved the land sale in concept. He said an initial approval wouldn't automatically lead to a sale, which will require a lot more paperwork and an appraisal.

&ldquo;My interest is in getting our library built,&rdquo; said Cox.

A joint-use library project at the new school has been on the table, but Cox said this might be the quicker option. &ldquo;It's just taken way, way too long.&rdquo;

Supervisor Jeff Smith said he supported the idea, and noted the county has money set aside for the library. &ldquo;The longer we wait, the more it's going to cost us to get it built.&rdquo;

Supervisor Anthony Farrington asked about enrollment levels in relation to building a new elementary school. Olson said the district's enrollment has been flat for several years.

&ldquo;We are not truly in decline as some of the other districts are,&rdquo; Olson said.

Cox said there isn't a unanimous consensus in the community that building the library on the original Big Canyon Road site is the best option.

During the discussion it was noted that having the library on the Loconoma site also would allow the creation of space for additional offstreet parking to serve downtown Middletown.

The board approved the land exchange concept unanimously and gave staff direction to explore it further.

E-mail Elizabeth Larson at [el Larson@lakeconews.com](mailto:el Larson@lakeconews.com).

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