

Construction manager hired for Rehoboth library project

Board also decides downtown location will stay open during renovation



The Rehoboth Beach Public Library board has hired Whiting & Turner to be the construction manager for the renovation of the downtown location and the new location to be built on Warrington Road. CHRIS FLOOD PHOTO

Chris Flood

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The renovation of the existing Rehoboth Beach Public Library and the construction of a new facility on Warrington Road took another step forward with the recent hiring of Whiting & Turner as the construction manager overseeing both legs of the project.

The library's board of trustees made the decision during its meeting in November. Kay Wheatley, board president, said four firms submitted proposals. Whiting & Turner was chosen because the board thought it would do the best job, she said.

Nearly two years ago, in an effort to serve its entire circulation area, the library announced plans to renovate the existing location and build a new library on Warrington Road off Route 24.

Back in July, members of a task force created to be a public voice through the design phase and library board members reached a consensus on a redesign of the downtown building's interior. The footprint is the same and the work is in the range of \$5 million to \$7 million. There would be a second restroom, more employee space, a smaller circulation desk and a retractable wall added to the second-floor meeting space, which allows for one large room or two smaller ones. Space along the north side of the building, immediately to the right of the entrance, would be

turned into three small study rooms that could each hold four people. A larger meeting room along the south side of the building that could hold 16 people would also be added.

A significant portion of the funds to renovate the downtown portion – \$3 million – is coming in the form of American Rescue Plan Act funds, which call for construction to be done by the end of 2026.

In addition to hiring a construction manager, the board decided that the existing library will stay open during the renovation project. There had been thoughts about closing during the renovation or relocating.

Recognizing construction will mean an inevitable reduction of services, Wheatley said there are a couple of reasons the board decided to stay open during construction – library users have made it clear they want it and costs associated with temporarily relocating are high. There may be a week when a closure is needed to run new plumbing or electric, but the plan is to keep those disruptions to a minimum, she said.

Wheatley said she's going to call a task force meeting when the interior drawings are done, which she expects in the first quarter of 2025. Soon after that, she said, fundraising efforts will begin, with a goal of construction beginning in September and work being done by Memorial Day 2026.

As for the Warrington Road library, Wheatley said the board will turn its attention to fundraising for that project once construction is started on the renovation of the existing library.