

The Tatamagouche Branch Library

Review of Facility & Service



March 8, 2007



Municipality of Colchester

The Tatamagouche Branch Library Review of Facility & Service

Background

The Colchester - East Hants Regional Library Board operates the branch library in Tatamagouche. The property was purchased by the Municipality in 1975 and the existing structure renovated at that time to become the new library. The Municipality has owned and maintained the building as a branch library since then.

Municipalities are responsible to provide the physical space for libraries and the regional library boards staff and outfit the facility.

At the January 2006 Council meeting, Janet Pelley, Library Director, along with Mr. Matheson, Library Board chairman, made a presentation to Council. The presentation outlined the changing services provided by libraries in communities and that the existing Tatamagouche facility does not allow these services to be offered. The Board has requested the Municipality consider replacing the facility in Tatamagouche. The request was forwarded to a future Council Committee.

At August 2006 Council, correspondence was submitted from Maralyn Driver of the Tatamagouche Village Square Committee, encouraging Council to proceed with planning for a new library branch and to locate the branch as part of the downtown . The correspondence was forwarded to Committee.

At the October Council Committee meeting Council approved by motion,
“...that the Municipality proceed with investigation of the replacement of the library facility in Tatamagouche and that staff be instructed to prepare a background report”.

Existing Facility

- The current library facility was purchased by the Municipality in 1975 to replace an existing, smaller library.
- The lot is small (1800 sq ft) measuring 30 ft along Main St and 60 ft on Queen. The lot has a steep grade which exposes the basement to the north. There is very little outdoor space for parking and other activities. On street parking is available along Main and a parking lot is close by on Queen St.
- The structure is a modest wood clad building. It is single storey with a shed roof addition to the west side.

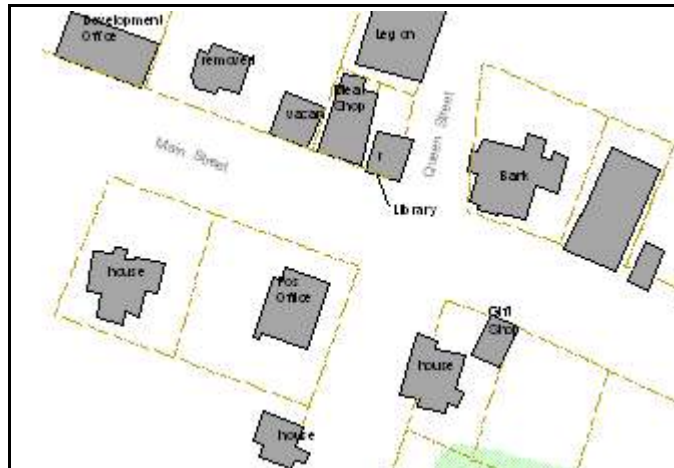


The building provides 682 square feet of useable library space. Age of the structure is unknown but appears to exceed 60 years. More recently there has been air quality issues in the structure that were dealt with by the municipality at the time. Regardless there remains an old and faint musty odour to the interior.

- The Branch is located on the corner of Main and Queen Streets, along the traditional commercial/ institutional core of the village. As illustrated on the attached map, the library abuts the following land uses:

west - Euston's meat shop;
south - post office

east - bank
north - legion branch.



The location works for people who use other Main St services such as the Bank, post office or retail outlets.

Service Area

It is difficult to provide an exact catchment area for a regional service such as a library. One does not think of the library as a principle destination but rather one of a number of stops that a person might make when in the Village. Therefore, factors such as where people shop or location of other services such as doctors office will influence the catchment area. Also, some users in the Tatamagouche catchment area might travel farther to use the more modern facility in River John.

The catchment area would include District 9 and likely other users from the Wentworth and Malagash sections of Cumberland County. The River John is likely drawing potential users from the Brule and Pictou County area who might use a more modern facility in conjunction with other activities in Tatamagouche. In 2001, Statistics Canada placed the population of District 9 at 2,759. Including the other described areas, the population for the catchment area should be approximately 3,000. Population of the North Shore has been fairly stable over the years and is expected to remain fairly stable over the foreseeable future. The area is popular with seniors and early retired “nearly seniors”. This group are likely to be library users and would

compensate for any decline in population. In other words, sizing of a new library space can be based on current population.

During the summer months, the North Shore population can expand by another 1,000 people when cottages are in use. When town libraries may slow down in summer, rural, coastal libraries in Tatamagouche and River John may expand their user base.



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User Base

Three sources of information are provided to better understand how the Library is used and by whom. First is an excerpt from the Library Board's annual report. Second is a descriptive observation offered by the branch staff and the final piece of information comes from a simple survey provided directly to the users through the County's newsletter.

1. Annual Report - Library Board

The annual report of the Colchester - East Hants Library Board provides statistics for each branch. Some numbers are factual while others are based on staff estimates. The information does, however, provide a synopsis of library use. For comparison purposes the information for Mount Uniacke and Stewiacke Branches are presented with Tatamagouche data. All three are similar in size and serve a largely rural community.

From the data provided, Tatamagouche is busier than Mount Uniacke but not as busy as

Stewiacke. Tatamagouche circulates an average of 6 books per population served annually compared to 2 at Mount Uniacke and 9 at the Stewiacke Branch.

The one public access computer is well used in Tatamagouche and based on the usage numbers at the other libraries, additional public computers are required. The few programs that were provided at Tatamagouche were well attended as was the summer reading program.

	Tatamagouche Branch	Mount Uniacke	Stewiacke
Pop Served	3,150 (est)	3,500 (est)	4,305 (est)
Facility size	682 sq ft.	1,800 sq ft.	1,454 sq ft.
Open	23 hrs / wk	18 hrs/wk	22 hrs/wk
Staff	0.87	1.35	1.69
Library visits	8,840 (est)	2,665 (est)	17,160 (est)
Circulation of materials	17,894	7,409	39,337
Materials used in Library (est)	20,644 (est)	1,456 (est)	15,080 (est)
Computer bookings	708 (1 computer)	2,233 (5 computers)	2,219 (5 computers)
Programs	15 programs 365 attendance	177 programs 828 attendance	133 programs 995 attendance
Summer reading club members	40 youth 27 adults	42 youth 12 adults	106 youth 31 adults

2. Observations of the Branch staff.

To offer a different perspective, library staff were asked to describe their existing user base.

“We serve all age groups, from pre-schoolers, to seniors. Their borrowing habits will tell you a lot about the community. Their wants range from picture books to literary prize winning novels. How they use the library seems to depend on where they are from. Locals who are pre-retirement (mostly women) read for recreation while the retired folk are into non-fiction and eclectic books. People who move there from away want to learn about getting back to the basics. Gardening is big with everyone. Our limited amount of space impacts on the experience we can offer to certain groups (like children, teens) so it's harder to peg them. Students use the library for recreational reading or to just hang out. It was noted that students who have been suspended from school have been recently hanging out at the library. One group who is harder to get to know are the non-readers. They come in to use the Internet, to check e-mail, file for unemployment insurance, etc.

Staff said the busiest time seems to be late morning and early afternoon as the Library is part of the drugstore - bank - post office - routine for many people in the community.”

3. Community Survey

A community meeting was hosted by the Village Commission and conducted by The Friends of the Tatamagouche Library in November 2006. The area Councillor, municipal staff and regional library staff were invited to attend the meeting. Discussion was dominated by possible location of a new library until it was suggested there should be greater emphasis on the composition of a future library. The group agreed that a new facility, and what services are provided by a new facility is more important than possible locations. As neither the community nor the Library Board had reviewed the service requirements, the Municipality agreed to conduct a brief survey to be circulated as part of the December County newsletter.

Response to the questionnaire has been strong with input for 78 by the end of February. The following are general comments and observations from reviewing the responses:

- Respondents cover a broad cross-section from students, to families with 3 children , early retirees and seniors;
- There appears to be a dedicated core of library users in the North Shore community. General comments suggest that a public library is important to their quality of life;
- Rural home owners will use the high speed, public access computer;
- With a larger space, users work like the book collection expanded and better organised;
- While they appreciate the service, the existing structure is too old and small. Three visitors is enough at one time and the building has a musty smell;
- There were a number of requests for a public meeting space to accommodate programming that cannot be offered today;
- Respondents like the existing location of the library, downtown, and close to other services such as bank, post office and drug store;
- Some respondents liked the downtown location but felt that parking was a factor to be improved.
- The following is a synopsis of responses from the questionnaire:

1. How often do you use the library?

Weekly	24	Occasionally/ seldom	9
2/ month	22	Never	4
1/ month	8	No response	1
1/ year	4		

Clearly the vast majority of respondents were the dedicated regulars who value the library as a community facility.

2. What new services would improve your use of the library or encourage you to use the library?

Larger collection	16	More programs	5
DVD/ music	7	More reference & workspace	4
More computers	10	Coffee bar	1
Meeting space	9	Good lighting	2
Comfortable seating	6	More hours	3
More space	14	Parking	7
Children's corner/ programing	7	Don't know / no response	16

The response to question #2 supports the notion that the library is too small by today's standards. They want more space to make the place more comfortable, so that the collection may be expanded and other services such as computers and programs can be offered.

3. Location of a new library was an issue raised at the community meeting hosted by the Village Commission. People were asked; **Where should a new library be located?**

Downtown/ Main St	51	Fraser Cultural Centre	2	Does not matter	2
Recreation Centre	7	Close to or part of school	3	No response	3
Old Irving Station	1	Foodland	1		
Creamery Square	3	Anywhere with Parking	5		

There were 78 different comments concerning where a new library should be located. Some respondents offered more than one location. Others suggested a location and noted that parking was also important. Of the 74 people who responded to the questionnaire, 69% preferred a downtown location.

4. Do you visit the library in conjunction with other destinations in the Village?

Yes	53
No	11
Sometimes	3
No response	7

There was a clear trend that 69% of respondents want a new library to be located in the downtown area. Some suggested sites while others simply stated close to the existing location. Many people commented that they stopped at the library in conjunction with other destinations such as the bank, post office and drug store.

5. Do you live in Tatamagouche?

Yes	30
No	41
No response	3

6. How long have you lived in the community?

0-9 yrs	14	25-39 yrs	15
10-24 yrs	24	40yrs +	18

7. Family size

1 person	14	4 persons	10
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2 persons	24	5 persons +	17
3 persons	5	no response	3

Composition of a Modern Library

Today, libraries do more than loan books. While still the important part of the library service, libraries now offer a variety of training and programming for their community. Because of its size, Tatamagouche Branch is limited in the services that can be provided and even the number of people that can comfortably be in the building at one time.

Retailers such as Chapters have created a consumer culture that encourage customers to linger in the store with coffee and comfortable seating. The children's section at Chapters emulates the children's section of a good public library. Tatamagouche does not have a children's section. Today library users want libraries to emulate retailers by providing more comfortable seating and services that encourage users to feel comfortable and stay longer.

Public access computers and internet remain popular, particularly in our rural communities where home based, high speed connection is not available. The Library Board's, annual report shows that the one computer in Tatamagouche is well used and the library could support additional computers. Public access computers also offer training opportunities for clients. In touring other libraries, it was clear that public access computers should be strategically located so that their use can be monitored.

Today, libraries offer more programming. Some programs may be offered by the library directly or the library may simply provide the venue. For example, Truro Branch offers "lunch and a movie" during the day for seniors. Programming requires a meeting space that is separate from the main space of the library. A well designed meeting space will allow for a multitude of activities such as kids crafts or first aid training to board room style meetings. Adequate storage for tables, chairs and supplies is vital.

A well designed library should be bright, without the glare of bright lights, comfortable and feel spacious without wasting space.

Design Standards for a Library

Ultimately the design and construction of a new library would involve a design professional such as an architect. However criteria has been established to guide the size and composition of a new public library. Library standards are based on the size of the community being served. For Nova Scotia, a stakeholder group comprised of Provincial and Regional Library representatives, prepared a guide entitled *Standards for Nova Scotia Regional Public Libraries*. The manual covers a range of topics from staffing, size of collection, hours of operation and size of facility. Standards are typically linked to the size of the community being served. The manual breaks down the standard further into a range from A to C, with 'A' being an excellent standard, 'B' is average or normal and 'C' is a base level of service. The provincial standards suggest a library sized between 2500 ('C' standard) 2625 ('B' standard) and 3500 for an 'A' standard.

For comparison purposes a design manual for public libraries in rural Wisconsin was also reviewed. The following are the results.

1. Collection

The annual report for the Library Board estimated a collection in Tatamagouche of about 12,600 books. While the estimated collection size is the same as Mount Uniacke, visual inspection would suggest that it is smaller.

Recommended
sq ft

Provincial standard recommends a collection size of 2 to 3 items per capita. With a user base of 3,000, the collection should be a minimum of 6 to 9,000 items.

1,100 sq ft

The Wisconsin example suggests a collection of 3.38 per capita and 10 periodical titles per 1,000 population. This would provide a recommended collection of 10,100, and 30 periodicals.

2. Collection Space

250 sq ft

NS standards recommend 10 volumes per sq. ft. For the purpose of this calculation, a collection size of 10,000 was used.

Wisconsin offer a variety of situations, but also recommends 10 volumes per sq ft as the norm for an adult section of a library.

3. Computer workstations (public)

Public access to computers for library services and high speed internet is a true issue in rural Nova Scotia. User information shows the one public computer is very well used in Tatamagouche. A new facility could support 5 public access computers. The NS guide recommends 3, 5 or 7 computers based on the C/ B/ A standard. No sq ft guidance is provided.

240 sq ft

Wisconsin model recommends providing 50 sq ft per workstation

4. Reader Space with & without table

Survey respondents suggested more comfortable seating is desirable along with work tables in a reference section.

Collection

10,000

NS guidelines recommend 2.5 per 1,000 pop for seating for 8 adults and a minimum seating for 6 children in that section. No sq ft recommendation provided.

Wisconsin guidelines recommend 13 seats for the Tatamagouche user base and 30 sq ft per seat for 390 sq ft. or 240 sq ft for 8 adult seats.

5. Meeting Space

NS guide recommends 10 sq ft per seat but does not recommend a number of seats.

500 sq ft

The Wisconsin guide also suggests 10 sq ft per seat and an additional space for the presenter. 25 sq ft per seat is required for a meeting room with a conference style table.

For the room to be versatile it should be designed with storage for tables, chairs, as well as craft and other materials. Counter space and wash up facility also very useful.

There is no guidance for the capacity of a meeting room. Suggested size is 20 persons. All libraries visited as part of this review have suggested that their meeting room should be larger.

6. Staff work space

NS Guide - 125 sq ft per staff
Wisconsin guide 125 to 150 sq ft per workstation

250 sq ft

7. Special Use Space

Wisconsin guide adds 10% for elements found in a library that does not fall within the previous categories such as newspaper racks, index tables, pamphlet files, index computer, or photocopier. The 10% is calculated based on the previous totals.

234 sq ft

8. Building Space

Furnace, restrooms, janitorial, storage etc. If not properly allocated, other spaces become compromised as some of these items are accommodated in the conceptual design. NS Guide allows for 30 to 40% while Wisconsin guide recommends 20 to 25 % . 25% is used for the calculation.

643 sq ft

Item 8 and to a lesser extent 7 can be reduced with a good efficient design.

Total
3217 sq ft

Based on these standards a library would be around 3,000 sq ft in size. A local contractor with experience with non-residential construction indicated this type of building would cost between \$100 to \$150/ sq ft depending upon how the building is finished. Based on \$125 / sq ft, a new library structure would cost around \$375,000. As with all construction projects there are additional costs such as design, land acquisition and landscaping.

Library Location

Locating a new public facility in a community can be a controversial issue. While everyone would agree that a new facility is required in Tatamagouche, there can be a variety of opinions about where the facility should be located.

At the community meeting there seemed to be a split between those who wanted the library to locate downtown and those who would like the library to become associated with the North Shore Recreation Centre. While there was amiable disagreement and debate, the division seemed to rest between two philosophies; a library is a natural part of a main street setting with the banks, post office and stores, versus those who believe a library located at the Rec Centre would be better for the youth of the community.

The response to the community survey supports a downtown location. Discussion in the library standards that were researched also support locating a library in a Main Street setting.

In recent years libraries have been co-located with other community facilities. For example, Cole Harbour Place clusters public facility in one structure. This is a solution for a suburban, “auto-centric” community that lacks a traditional downtown as part of its identity.

Tatamagouche, however, has a charming, traditional downtown that continues to be vibrant because of its variety of compatible activities. Whenever possible, public facilities such as libraries should be celebrated and located in prominent locations in our communities. It is recommended that the library be located downtown should an appropriate site be available.

A number of locations have been suggested through the questionnaire, which are previously listed. Other suggestions made to staff through this process are:

1. Expanding the existing site to include the adjacent butcher shop;
2. Acquire the development building, place the library on the main floor and rent the upstairs.
3. Co-locate at Creamer Square or the Fraser Cultural Centre.
4. The former Ultramar or Irving service station sites.

Land Requirements for a new facility.

The existing property is extremely small, in fact the lot is smaller than the recommended size of a new structure. The existing lot cannot accommodate a new library without combining it with adjacent property.

The Planning Policies for Main Street encourage higher density development with very limited setbacks and no requirement for off street parking. A new library will attract more use. Should programming be added to the library service, there will be greater demand on on-street parking. If the right lot is available, it is recommended that a new library include off-street parking for 10

vehicles.

The minimum lot size in Tatamagouche is 6,500 square feet. In the commercial core of the Village, new development is encouraged to maintain the streetscape with minimal setback requirements from side and front yards. For the purposes of developing a new library, a minimum of 7 to 10,000 sq ft. of useable space is required.

There are a handful of lots or combination of property that meet this minimum requirement within close proximity to the existing location.

It is recommended that Council instruct staff to consult property owners to determine availability of land and costs. Similar to the civic centre process, staff would then bring the results back to Council, with a recommendation, for further direction.

Once land is secured, Council would proceed to designing the facility. The Regional Library staff and the community should be consulted in this phase.

After design, construction can take place based on the capital budget priorities of Council.

Conclusion and recommendation

1. The existing Tatamagouche Library has long outlived its ability to properly serve the community's need. The facility is small, old and musty. Those who use the facility now are dedicated patrons of the public library system. A new facility will generate more use including the local school. It is recommended that the library facility be replaced.
2. A new facility should be sized at about 3,000 sq ft. At today's building costs of approximately \$125/ sq ft a construction budget of approximately \$ 375,000 is anticipated, not including land purchase and site work such as landscaping.
3. Council has added Tatamagouche library to the municipal capital priority list, without a set construction date. Next step in the process would be to acquire the site. Staff recommend a downtown location for a new library, within reasonable distance from the existing facility. Staff should be directed to research and negotiate 3 to 4 potential sites and bring recommendations back to Council. Should an appropriate site not be found within the downtown area, staff would recommend expanding the search area.
4. When evaluating sites, consideration should be given to the provision of some off-street parking on a potential site;
5. Once a site is acquired, design of the facility can commence. The Library Board staff should be involved with the design and functional layout of a new facility.