

Closed for renovation until further notice.

BLACK ROCK BRANCH LIBRARY UPDATE - August 2, 2007

BIDS ARE IN

On July 18, bids for the Black Rock Renovation and Expansion were opened. The lowest bidder is going through the process of checks and balances with the City to be sure their bid is in compliance and satisfies all requirements. Concurrently, work is being done on permits and other documents. The Library hopes a "notice to proceed" will be issued no later than the end of August 2007. With that approval in hand the contractor's name will be made public and the company will begin the initial step of asbestos abatement.

Bridgeport Mayor John M. Fabrizi announced details of a funding proposal to renovate the long shuttered Black Rock Library, as well as other capital improvements. The mayor has submitted a proposal to the City Council to utilize \$10,075,000 in Local Capital Improvement (LoCIP) funds to renovate the library as well as to construct a new regional emergency operations center (EOC), a new animal shelter complex, complete renovations at Fairchild Wheeler Golf Course, and improve other parks and roadways. Following the announcement, the mayor led a tour of the library for elected officials, library advocates, students, residents and business owners in the West End and Black Rock neighborhoods.

"While I appreciate the efforts of so many who have worked to secure State funding for these renovations the reality is, we have been talking about this for almost ten years. Enough is enough," stated Fabrizi. "My job is to protect Bridgeport taxpayers by increasing services in the most cost effective way. By using LoCIP funds, we will be able to renovate and expand the library, build the EOC and animal shelter complex, and make Fairchild Wheeler a tournament caliber golf course - all at no cost to the residents of this city. If we were to bond for these projects, we would be asking Bridgeport taxpayers to pay \$16 million over the next 20 years or over \$800,000 annually. That makes absolutely no sense."

The Black Rock branch library was constructed in 1932 and serves a neighborhood of approximately 23,500 residents and four schools (Black Rock, Longfellow, Longfellow Annex, and St. Ann Schools).

During its last year of full operation in 2003, the branch served 23,213 patrons, who borrowed 31,800 items. In addition, nearly 6,000 patrons used the branch's computers for research, recreation, and job searches. The Black Rock branch library closed in Fall 2003 and temporarily relocated to the Black Rock Arts Center through September 2004, when this temporary site finally closed.

Renovation planning began in 1997 to replace the 1930s electrical, plumbing, and heating systems, make the building ADA compliant, expand the building's technology by

adding WIFI connectivity, and add space for increasing the library's collections and programming for children's activities and story hours. In addition, the renovations are designed to increase the building's capacity to serve the community during the evenings and on weekends by adding two multi-function rooms for programs, lectures, and meetings. The current building is 6,953 square feet and will nearly double in size to 12,374 square feet after the renovation and expansion is completed.

The Architects are completing revised drawings and construction documents for the renovation. The firm doing this work is Schoenhardt [<http://www.schoenhardt.com/>]. Other current projects they are working on include the renovation and expansion of the South Norwalk Branch of the Norwalk Public Library.

Black Rock resident Robert Foley has created a short documentary on the Black Rock Branch Library Project: Black Rock Branch Video