

City Council OKs Funds To Design Library Expansion

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H. B. Independent

City Council has agreed to fork over the funds for a design of the Central Library expansion, but would not commit to funding the \$7.4 million project.

Council unanimously voted to appropriate \$151,000 to pay an architect to design all three phases of the expansion, which calls for a 400-seat auditorium, meeting rooms and the realignment of Talbert Avenue.

Monday's action follows council's Aug. 10 decision to finance the project's first phase, a \$3.8 million, 32,070-square-foot children's wing.

At that time, council members balked at financing all three phases because they felt it would conflict with fundraising efforts for rebuilding the municipal pier, which is estimated to cost at least \$10 million.

Councilman Don MacAllister said talking about funding for the entire project would be inappropriate until May, when the city begins work on its annual budget.

"I can't support building all three phases unless we know budget-wise whether we can afford it. It would be more appropriate to discuss that aspect

at budget time and not in the middle of the year," MacAllister said.

The children's wing will provide more room for children's programs and books, a new circulation and atrium area, and 231 additional parking spaces.

Construction on that portion of the project is slated to begin next summer and take a year to complete.

Original plans for the library, which was designed in 1970 and opened in 1975, called for the full-scale expansion, according to Ron Hayden, library director.

Since the library opened its doors, the city's population has doubled and library circulation has increased by more than 100 percent.

City officials estimate that there is approximately \$3.7 million currently available for the expansion.

