



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 18-1189, **Version:** 1

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**From:** County Administrative Office

**SUBJECT:**

Space for the Rio Dell Branch Library

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Board of Supervisors receive the staff report and provide direction to staff to take the necessary actions required to negotiate either an acquisition or a lease for the Rio Dell Branch Library.

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

Library Fund, ADA Compliance Fund, General Fund

**DISCUSSION:**

The Rio Dell Library is currently located in a facility owned by the Rio Dell Fire District and leased by the library. The county's 2016 consent decree with the Department of Justice (DOJ) identified several barriers that prevent this facility from meeting requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, the Rio Dell Fire District has cited limited financial resources to remediate these barriers. Therefore, staff has begun identifying options to either remediate these barriers, or to relocate the Rio Dell Library. Pursuant to the consent decree, the barriers consist of providing an accessible route to the ramp, alterations to the ramp and providing compliant handrails and wheel guides at an estimated cost of \$127,000. Based upon construction cost estimates, the Rio Dell Fire District has stated that it does not have the financial capacity to make the aforementioned modifications. The Rio Dell Library is located at 715 Wildwood Avenue in Rio Dell and the county currently pays \$250 per month for 900 square feet of space with circulation numbers of 12,316 items per year. The branch location offers a range of services such as internet connectivity, children's reading and craft programs and book sales.

Staff has begun searching for possible alternative locations of branch library services within the city limits of Rio Dell and the neighboring community of Scotia. Some potential alternate locations include a potential DANCO multi-family housing development, available space at the local chamber of commerce, the Rio Dell School District and commercial office space located in the town of Scotia. A key point involving any relocation of programs, services or activities to keep in mind is that the new location must be fully compliant with ADA regulations. Relocating or closing the branch library is dependent upon DOJ approval. Following is a summary of potential options for the Rio Dell Library:

**Option One:** DANCO has proposed including a new library facility in their 26-unit planned multi-family, permanent supportive housing project, Rio Dell Rigby Affordable Housing Project, located at the south-west corner of Rigby Avenue and Center Street in Rio Dell. The DANCO project will consist of 28 total buildings, which includes a community resource center and a building that could possibly be the new home of the Rio Dell Branch Library. It could also potentially house and provide onsite services to clients for the Department of Health & Human Services. As part of the project development, the concept is to provide a new 1,000-square-foot building and lease the space to the county for approximately \$1.25 per square foot or approximately \$1,250 per month for library use. The branch library would be located in a residential section of Rio Dell and not on the main thoroughfare where it is currently located. DANCO would initially finance the new

construction at cost with a commitment from the county to relocate and lease the facility for a period to be negotiated. It should be noted that community members in Rio Dell have expressed concern about the location of the project as it would be in close proximity with clients. However, the facility would be new construction and subject to meeting ADA standards for full accessibility. One other caveat to this option is that DANCO needs to know the intent and direction the county desires to take by the end of September.

**Option Two:** Another proposed option is to locate the branch library to the Rio Dell Chamber of Commerce building. The space, located at 406 Wildwood Avenue in Rio Dell, consists of a shared space with the Arts District. Leased space is estimated to cost \$1,200 per month including utilities. The upside to this location is that it is on the main thoroughfare within Rio Dell; however, ADA remediation costs are an unknown at this time, as an assessment of the facility could not be performed due to certified access specialist availability. This site also houses an apartment above the leased space and is not typical of a library environment.

**Option Three:** Staff has also reached out to Rio Dell School District to explore the possibility of leasing a vacant parcel on district property in the vicinity of 95 Center Street in Rio Dell. The concept was to place a modular building on a vacant parcel and negotiate any improvements necessary to remove ADA barriers. The district stated that there are a number of future capital improvements that may conflict with providing space for a library and is not interested at this time.

**Option Four:** As an alternative option for relocation, staff initiated conversations with a commercial property owner for potential commercial space located in the Town of Scotia. Several options exist within Scotia but only a few locations present viable solutions, as the other locations contain several costly ADA barriers such as parking and path of travel. The viable locations consist of two separate spaces located at 113 Main Street suites A and B and are located in the Scotia Shopping Center. Suite A is 1,300 square feet at a cost ranging from \$2,040 to \$3,340 per month including utilities. Suite B is 1,522 square feet at a cost ranging from \$2,262 to \$3,784 per month including utilities. In order to determine a set monthly cost, the terms of lease will need to be negotiated. The property owner stated that the county would need to perform any tenant and ADA improvements considered necessary or appropriate or negotiate lease terms that take into consideration said improvements into the lease, which means monthly lease rates may be significantly more than stated above. As the Board is aware, the Town of Scotia is adjacent to the City of Rio Dell, which means that library services are in close proximity to the existing location. This option, however, does relocate library services away from the main thoroughfare in Rio Dell, and Rio Dell altogether. Additionally, ADA remediation costs are an unknown at this time, as an assessment of these locations could not be performed due to certified access specialist availability.

**Option Five:** Another option staff explored involved gauging the interest level of the Rio Dell Fire District regarding the disposition of 715 Wildwood Avenue in Rio Dell, the current location of the library. The Rio Dell Fire District is not interested in selling the property to the county even though this option would allow the branch to remain at the existing location and the county would then be responsible for removing identified ADA consent decree barriers, which are estimated at \$250,000.

**Option Six:** There is also the possibility, pursuant to DOJ approval, that the Board may exercise the option to close the Rio Dell Branch Library. The option to close the branch location is predicated upon the possibility that the DOJ may allow elimination of programs, services and activities as long it is for all sectors of the population. Rio Dell and the surrounding community would still be able to access library services via the next closest branch in Fortuna.

The aforementioned options all contain opportunities and challenges in terms of increased lease costs, public

opinion and the ADA. The DANCO option would deliver a new facility that is ADA compliant but at a higher cost than what the Rio Dell Branch Library is currently paying. Reservations regarding this possible location have been expressed publicly due to the nature of the project. The Chamber of Commerce location also has increased costs in the forms of higher rent and ADA compliance; however, this site is on the main thoroughfare and still located within Rio Dell city-limits. The Rio Dell School District is not an option at this time, as district officials have expressed no interest in providing a location for the library. The Town of Scotia, though not in the city-limits of Rio Dell, has two viable options but at an increased cost in the form of lease payments and ADA barrier removal. The fifth option, acquisition of the current location of the library, is not an option, as the Rio Dell Fire District is not amenable to subdividing and sale of the parcel. The final option involves the elimination of library services in Rio Dell, which offers savings to the library's budget for salaries and operational costs.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

All options except elimination of library services contain a financial impact to the Library Fund in the form of higher rent payments. The ADA Compliance Fund would also be impacted in each proposed option except for the DANCO proposal. Increasing costs and the capacity of the Library to absorb higher rent, tenant improvements, exterior maintenance and relocation costs may affect the General Fund due to the possibility of an allocation from the General Fund to the Library Fund. The DANCO option is estimated to increase costs by an estimated \$1,000 per month along with one-time relocation costs. The Chamber of Commerce location would increase costs by \$950 per month for rent and costs for tenant improvements, ADA barrier removal and relocation may cost upwards of \$300,000. The Rio Dell School District is not an option at this time due to district capital improvements and possible conflicts with current available space. The Town of Scotia options come with higher rent costs ranging from \$1,800 to \$3,500 more per month. Those figures however do not take into account costs associated with ADA barrier removal, tenant improvements and relocation. Acquisition of the Rio Dell Fire District building is not a current option. It should be noted the Rio Dell Branch Library is funded by the county.

This agenda item supports the Board's Strategic Framework by managing our resources to ensure sustainability of services and providing community-appropriate levels of service.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

City of Rio Dell, Rio Dell Fire District

**ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Board discretion.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A Potential Rio Dell Sites

Attachment B Potential Scotia Sites

**PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:**

Board Order No.: N/A

Meeting of: N/A