

Edgewater rejects library property as too expensive

By **DAVID KENNEDY**
dkennedy@nsb-observer.com

EDGEWATER — Rudy Gutierrez likes having a library in his neighborhood.

The single parent dropped off his 11-year-old daughter at the library yesterday with her bicycle so she could work on her science project for her fifth-grade Edgewater Public Elementary School class.

When she finished deciding on her hypothesis for her project about dish soaps, Carmen Gutierrez planned on riding her bike to her Needle Palm Drive home,

only a few blocks away.

“The location is awesome,” Rudy Gutierrez said.

Seeing the need for an expansion in the future, library board members want to keep the current location at 103 Indian River Blvd. because of its central location to the city and surrounding neighborhoods.

The hope to keep that “awesome” location hit a snag at Monday night’s City Council meeting.

Council members voted

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unanimously to reject a counter offer from owners of the home at 1822 Banyan Tree Drive and investigate a vacant property next to the library further unless the owners would agree to the appraised price.

The three-bedroom home was appraised at \$158,000 and is one of two homes being looked at for future expansion of the library.

Owners Patricia and Joseph

Tomazin IV rejected that price when the city offered it earlier, City Manager Jon Williams said.

Efforts to reach the Tomazins were unsuccessful.

The owners countered with a price of \$189,000, but council members said the price was too steep in the wake of the property tax crisis and the city's large debt. The price also included an additional

\$10,000 for demolition of the home on the lot.

"I'd love to buy that piece of property and buy the house next to it for expansion, but not at the cost of being robbed," Councilman Dennis Vincenzi said.

At 31,000 square-feet, the vacant lot to the east of the library is about 20 percent larger than the home's lot.

The vacant lot's owner,

Mike Stull, said the listed price of \$465,000 remains negotiable.

He also told council members that his lot is 20 percent larger than the two lots being considered for the library expansion. The price of his single lot would likely be cheaper than the price of the two homes combined, he stressed.

"Comparing apples to

apples, mine is much cheaper," Stull claimed.

Despite the setback on the property purchase, the leader of the city's library board understood the decision.

"They're in a position where they don't have financial backing right now and they don't want to get into debt," Library Board Chairwoman Jean Haughwout said.

The City Council told the

board to focus on the property at 1822 Banyan Tree Drive because of its price and the owner's need to sell, said Ruth McCormack, the head librarian for Edgewater Public Library.

There isn't an immediate need to expand, she said.

"We are again looking at putting it in the distance until the money situation improves," McCormack said.