After several stops and starts in recent years, plans for modernized libraries in Bloomfield appear to be a reality, pending approval from voters.

The town council Monday received a presentation on plans for about $29 million in construction costs to reconstruct and enlarge the Prosser Library and renovate and expand the McMahon libraries at their current sites. The plan includes $22.6 million to construct a 27,800 square-foot, two-floor Prosser Library, including a 110-foot bridge over Wash Brook.

Construction of the McMahon branch would cost $5.9 million for an 8,900-square-foot, single-floor building. Construction would begin in late 2022 with a 16-month process at the Prosser site and 10-month process at McMahon.

If approved by the town council in June, the proposal would go to a referendum Nov. 2.

Library Board of Directors Chairman Greg Davis gave the council an overview with artists’ renderings of the proposed new buildings created by TSKP Studio Monday.

“We made a commitment that we couldn’t do one without the other,” Davis said. “There is a need for two state of the art libraries.”

Longtime Republican Council member Joseph Merritt said he is not a fan of the initial design concepts. Both featured libraries are dominated by high glass walls and a modern look, which Merritt said would be fine in an urban setting but did not fit with the town’s effort to maintain a small New England feel.

“I just don’t think it fits into the center of town,” Merritt said Monday. “It would be a shame if it went down [at referendum] because of a radical design.”

Mayor Suzette DeBeatham-Brown said she would like to see more brick work incorporated into the next phase of the design, which is expected to be brought back to the council for its June 14 meeting.

But council member Danielle Wong disagreed.

“I love the design,” she said. “It brightens up the center. We have a bunch of brick blocks in the center.”

Wong said she also appreciated that the McMahon branch was included in the plans.

Regardless of the design, library director Elizabeth Lane said the upgrades at both buildings are necessary. The Prosser branch was built in 1965 and the McMahon branch was built in 1972.

“It’s time,” she said.

Lane listed several issues at the heart of the need for new buildings, including: flooding at the Prosser branch; poor accessibility and visibility; a lack of study, meeting and collaborative spaces; safety concerns and a lack of parking.

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