Library renovations underway

After an unexpected two month delay because of change orders, renovations have begun in earnest at the Pottstown Regional Public Library.

On the main floor, a new passport office will be constructed on the east side of the building, next to a staff work room and handicapped accessible rest rooms.

A new floor over these rooms will connect to the existing mezzanine along the south side of the building. The mezzanine extension will contain a new community meeting room with a large window overlooking the main floor.

A new stop on the existing elevator to the second floor (used for storage) will provide access to the mezzanine.

The library will also have a new sewer line running through the basement which will eliminate numerous plumbing problems experienced in recent years.

The library building was built in 1918 as the Pottstown Post Office. It was converted to the library in 1961 when the current post office was constructed at High and Madison streets.

In the process of removing the floor covering in the main room, contractors discovered gorgeous marble tile in what had been the lobby of the post office. That tile will be cleaned and preserved. New vinyl tile flooring will be installed in the rest of the main floor, and new carpet will be installed in the basement children’s library.

A new circulation desk will be installed, and a new dropped ceiling will be hung over the main floor.

Less visible, but terribly important, says librarian Susan Davis, is a new phone system. The existing phone system is unreliable and discourages people from calling.

A new handicapped ramp will connect the front sidewalk and side handicapped parking to the front entrance to the library. The grand front stairway will be reassembled with existing granite slabs.

If money is left over, the front windows and doors will be repainted.

All this is being done for about $630,000, of which half came from a state Keystone Fund grant. The rest had to be raised locally.

The terms of the state grant require the project to be completed by Oct. 31.

As a Pottstown School Board member, I am impressed at how much the library — a non-profit — is accomplishing with such modest funding.

In school district world, we can drop $630,000 just to replace a roof on one elementary school.

Our library is a terrific — and often unappreciated — community asset.

STEEL BEING DELIVERED last week at the Pottstown Regional Public Library. Renovations were delayed more than two months while steel was cut to expand the mezzanine over the main floor. Architect Dick Frantz’s plans had to be modified because of unforeseen conditions discovered early in the renovations.