This is to report on the status of the public library planning and design project which is partially funded with Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program funds through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and governed by the Regulations and Assurances in the application and the grant Agreement.

NARRATIVE: (Describe briefly what happened on your project during this report month. If necessary, use an additional sheet.)

Please see attached.

Dated at The Jones Library this 27th day of July, 2016

Name of Person Submitting Report: Sharon Sharry

Signature of Person Submitting Report: [Signature]

Complete reverse only if you have entered into a contract with an architect
# FINANCIAL: Total Eligible Project Costs

## I. Project Funding

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MPLCP Grant Funds Awarded</td>
<td>a</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Local/Other Funds Budgeted</td>
<td>b</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Total; Funds Available (a+b)</td>
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## II. Expenditures to Date

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MPLCP Grant Funds Expended to date</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Local/Other Funds Expended to date</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Total Funds Expended (d+e)</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Balance remaining to expend (c-f)</td>
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## III. MPLCP Funds Summary

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total MPLCP Grants Funds received to date</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MPLCP Grant Funds Remaining in Local Accounts</td>
<td>$34,463.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of grant payments received</td>
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We certify that all unexpended MPLCP funds are earning interest in a separate account.

Attachments:

- Other Project Information/Documentation

Submit one copy on WHITE paper plus any documentation required to:
Deborah Roth, Contracts Specialist
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
98 N. Washington St., Suite 401, Boston, MA 02114-1933
June 2016

1. Scattered throughout the Library building are places for Library patrons to post comments about the building. We call it the “What do you like about this space” project. The comments were transcribed and posted to the Library’s website.

2. Kept the Interim Town Manager, Peter Hechenbleikner, and the Town’s Assistant Town Manager, Dave Ziomek, apprised of our project’s progress, including discussions about abutting properties.

3. Worked with the architects on our Building Program, and worked with our Owner’s Project Manager on the budget. Discussions were held to continue to align the budget with the Program. Met weekly with key Library staff in developing the Program and aligning it with the budget.

4. Patron comments/questions/concerns were responded to via email and during meetings.

5. The Trustees of the Historical Society was unable to meet the June 1, 2016 deadline to find out whether or not they can legally deviate from their deed. Thus, the Library Trustees and the Feasibility Committee held a joint meeting in order to approve one of two options:
   a) Option #1: Use Strong House land assuming the deed will be resolved soon and that a land sale may be permitted with current zoning per reexamination by the Town.
   b) Option #2: Use only the land the Library currently owns. If in the future the land may be acquired then revise application to the MBLC for a site change.

The MBLC recommended option 2, although they understand that if a preferred land option becomes available, it will be considered. The Library Trustees unanimously voted to direct the architects, Finegold Alexander, to design schematics using the land currently owned by the Jones Library.

6. Discussed the results of this Trustee vote with the President of the Historical Society. The Library is still interested in collaborating, but needs the Historical Society to take the steps necessary to deviate from their Deed, then come back to the Library Trustees when/if they are given legal permission to sell.

7. Received and responded to a second Public Records Request.

8. Collaborated with the Greenfield Public Library on a letter to the MBLC with a proposed definition of “Community Hub Library.”

9. Held a second public information session.

10. Library Trustees wrote Letters to the Editor.

11. Property Survey/Hazmat/Geotech test boring proposals were received. The borings were scheduled for July 11, 2016.

12. Updated our in-house building project display by posting pictures of “21st Century Libraries.”

13. Gave a tour of the Library to the Town’s Disability Access Advisory Committee. Key points included:
a) Parking is too far away, not only from the Library’s side entrance, but also from the rooms where the programs occur.
b) There should really be one elevator, centrally located, which goes to all floors. (The 90’s addition makes moving around the Library very complicated; fixing this problem is not going to be easy or inexpensive.)
c) The Technical Services Department, the Staff lounge, and the staff bathrooms are not accessible.
d) All public rooms are accessible (although many are not easily accessible, due to the small size of the front elevator).
e) There should be accessible adult restrooms on the main floor; and these rest rooms need to be closer to the rooms where the programs occur.
f) Most of the tables are too low, due to the “skirts.”
g) Throughout the building, there needs to be more room for wheelchairs to turn around. The doors should be wider; the alcoves need to be wider.
Jones Library might be able to buy portion Amherst Historical Society land without zone change

Amherst Town Meeting voted to ask Jones Library trustees to "substantially preserve" the Kinsey Memorial Garden instead of preserving it in its entirety. (Diane Lederman/The Republican)

By Diane Lederman | dlederman@repub.com
Follow on Twitter
on May 27, 2016 at 4:18 PM

AMHERST — The Jones Library may be able to buy a portion of the Amherst Historical Society land without a zone change after all.

This news was conveyed on the same night Town Meeting voted on a petition article governing the use of the library's garden.
Library trustees had asked to rezone a portion of land owned by the Amherst Historical Society from general residence to general business to allow for expansion there, but the meeting rejected the measure, limiting the library's building options.

Now it appears that the historical society might be able to sell a portion of the land without the zoning change, said temporary Town Manager Peter Hechenbleikner. He said planning staff noticed, on a partial property survey the day after the vote, that there might be a parcel of society land available that would not need a zone change. He said library and historical society staff will have to hire a surveyor to check the entire parcel.

Meanwhile, the trustees were given a little flexibility with the garden, which will be affected by the library expansion.

A petition filed by Carol Pope asked that the trustees preserve the Kinsey Memorial Garden "in its entirety." The meeting instead directed the trustees to "substantially preserve," the garden.

The library expects to know within the next two weeks whether it will be able to buy the small parcel of historical society land, Library Director Sharon Sharry said in an email.

"Once we do, the architects will move ahead with our designs," she said.

"As we have said all along, the Kinsey Garden will be preserved as much as possible.

Library officials are planning to apply for a state grant in January to help pay for a plan to expand from the 18,000 square feet to 68,000 square feet. The last expansion was more than two decades ago.

"I am happy to say that the results of 2016 Town Meeting will have a positive effect on the Library's building in the email."
Burleigh Muten: Jones needs to combine children's rooms

Wednesday, June 01, 2016

Jones needs to combine children's rooms

I'm disappointed that Amherst Town Meeting members chose not to support rezoning of the property that hosts the Amherst Historical Society, a move that challenges a well-thought-out plan to connect it to the Jones Library.

As a former teacher of young children in Amherst and a children's author, I've spent many hours benefitting from the impressive collection of children's literature housed in the Jones Library. For the past 20 years, I've led numerous writing workshops for young authors at the library. Then there are the years spent there as a parent.

The children's collection is located in five different rooms beneath one roof. Actually five when you include the Young Adult collection in the central atrium. Middle grade novels are in one room. Picture books in another. The biography and poetry sections are actually on a different floor, as is the activity room.

Wouldn't it be worthwhile for those talented librarians to supervise the community's children and the collection on one floor in one large room? That's just one reason the library needs to expand. There are many others.

Let's respect and support our librarians, who know more than we do about why and how the library needs this expansion.

Burleigh Muten
Amherst
News > Local (/News/Local/)

What's next for Jones?

Under Proposed Option 1, a library expansion would remove a large portion of the Kinsey Memorial Garden, which is located top of the purple area in this architect's rendering. It would also require demolition of much of the 1990s addition. JONES LIBI
By SCOTT MERZBACH
Staff Writer

Saturday, June 04, 2016

EDITOR'S NOTE: On May 16, Amherst Town Meeting rejected a proposed rezoning of the Amherst History Museum property at 67 Amity St.
The change was sought to give those planning an expansion of the Jones Library more elbow room.
Today, the Gazette looks ahead at the project's future.

What does the defeat of the rezoning mean for the plan?

While the defeat of the rezoning of the library's neighboring property from general residence to general business doesn't stop a potential expansion, it does limit options for such a project.

“The preferable solution was the zoning change," said John Kuhn, a principal with Kuhn Riddle Architects, which is assisting lead architect Finegold Alexander of Boston.

Kuhn said the zoning change would have been the best outcome for the library because if the land can be acquired, it would have given maximum flexibility for the project. Now, even if a portion of the historical society land is purchased, the general residence zoning limits the amount of land that can be built on.

Any expansion of the building would also intrude more on the Kinsey Memorial Garden, which forms the back yard of the library.

Yes, about that garden ... Town Meeting members also asked that it be preserved. What's the impact of that?

Library trustees have all along said they intend to keep as much of the garden as possible during any building project, so the vote mirrors what is planned. As originally written, the advisory from Town Meeting was to preserve the garden in its entirety, but this was never taken up by the session last month.
Let’s back up. Why is an expansion and renovation even being considered?

Elected trustee Tamson Ely said the bottom line is that the Jones Library building is already too small. “We are not meeting the needs of current library users,” Ely said.

Kuhn said there is a misconception that the size of any proposed addition is being driven by the town’s population. In fact, if library officials can show that the current building isn’t meeting the town’s needs, then an expansion is warranted.

Department heads have outlined their concerns with the current building, last renovated and expanded in the early 1990s. Library Director Sharon Sharry said these concerns, along with input from users through surveys and community forums, are guiding the project.

Linda Wentworth, head of collections, said there is insufficient room for audiovisual materials, and too few tables and chairs for patrons to use.

Mia Cabana, head of youth services, said there is no private area to plan children’s programs and limited space for activities to be held. For instance, when story time happens, children aren’t allowed to continue using the computers. Not having enough room also caps the number of children who can participate in events.

More problematic, said young adult coordinator Garrett Plinder, is that there is no dedicated space for teenagers. While many teens come to the library, unlike toddlers and elementary school children, they have no area to call their own.

Amy Anaya, head of borrower services, said problems she observes include a dysfunctional circulation desk and challenges for staff in moving materials around the building without disturbing patrons.

At special collections, space is so tight that Cyndi Harbeson, head of special collections, said there is no room to accept many donations related to Amherst history.

**What is the Save Our Library group and why are its members against an expansion?**

This is a community group made up of residents, including some past presidents of the library trustees, who argue the public has not been adequately consulted about the need for an expansion.

Its members haven’t yet been convinced a library expansion is warranted, in part because some are familiar with the functioning of the library and have, in the past, called for studying space needs before embarking on a costly building project.

**Couldn’t library space issues be dealt with by reconfiguring the building? Aren’t there some empty rooms in the Jones?**

Some who question an expansion say there is unused space, pointing to the third floor of the original building where the public rarely ventures, including the Goodwin Room, used mostly for trustees meetings.

Members of Save Our Library have argued that there may be sufficient space at the Jones
and off-site, calling for trustees to explore using the vacant East Street School building as a site for processing materials to free up room at the Jones.

**With the library drawing in so many teenagers and children, isn't expansion a necessity?**

That is the argument made by staff.

Young adults are the patrons most affected by the limited space, Pinder said, with a collection growing into the atrium, but no room of their own in which to hang out and act as teenagers. "The reality is that teens do not feel welcome in other places in downtown," Pinder said.

Cabana said youth services is a microcosm of the problems in the library, with shelves too tall for some children, the collection split between two floors and the lone public bathroom on the main level.

"There's a bit of a false sense we don't need an expansion," Cabana said.

"Part of that perception is that staff puts up with these problems so cheerfully."

**How will space needs for this project be determined?**

How big a new library should be will be based on continuing feedback from staff and public, as well as figuring out what the community can afford.

The space needs in the whole library program suggest an expanded Jones should be 101,000 square feet, up from the current 47,000-square-foot building. Kuhn said architects have already reduced this to 68,000 square feet.

Sharry said she wants the public to trust the architects in developing the project.

"Finding a happy medium is what the architects will do," Sharry said.

**This all sounds expensive. What's this going to cost - and who's paying?**

Current projections for a 68,000-square-foot building show that the project would cost $33 million, with about $12.5 million provided by the state.

That means the town's share would be $20 to $21 million.

**Couldn't a smaller renovation be enough?**

While it is true a renovation-only project would take care of some issues at the building, the town would pick up the entire tab for the work.

Matt Blumenfeld, a financial consultant assisting trustees, said the town would likely have to spend millions on its own for no net gain of space.

At a bare minimum, Sharry said early projections indicate there are an estimated $655,000 in building repairs needed over the next five years. T

he atrium roof, for example, continues to leak, and the two elevators often break down.
But these renovation costs are likely going to rise to between $5 million and $10 million, and include installing sprinklers and additional climate controlled space, as well as the urgency in dealing with the growing teen population that wants to use the library but has limited opportunities to do so.

"Doing work piecemeal would force another generation of children and teenagers to not be served the way they need to be," Sharry said.

The town has so many other building projects being planned and studied. Why should the Jones Library get so much money?

Sharry said she understands the town has other projects under discussion, including an expanded and renovated Wildwood School, a new Department of Public Works headquarters and a new fire station for South Amherst.

"We would never go to Town Meeting saying our building project is the most important," Sharry said.

Sarah McKee, a former president of the trustees, said the costs are paramount.

"A number of Amherst residents are more concerned right now about financing for the schools and fire house, and paying for roads," McKee said.

Town Meeting previously backed money for project planning for the library. Are members sending a mixed message to trustees?

Town Meeting approved spending $25,000 to match the state's $50,000 Planning and Design grant, but even when this was done in 2014 members expressed concerns about the potential for a new building and whether renovation would be sufficient.

Carl Erikson, a former trustee, said the votes against rezoning shouldn't be seen as sending a mixed message, but rather making responsible decisions based on the pressure of a state deadline, with an application due to state library officials in January, and not having enough information about the project.

Carol Gray, another former trustee, agrees with this assessment.

"Rather than being a contradiction, this is just prudent planning," Gray said.

"It's OK to spend a little to explore a possibility but bad to spend enormous amounts on an idea that, after exploration, turns out to be more negative than positive."

Does the vote against rezoning mean the library and historical society won't forge a partnership?

By all indications, the society and Jones Library will continue to work on collaborations, with the library pledging to set aside 1,000 square feet of climate controlled space for collections held by the society. These collaborations could still include a future land sale.

If this all makes so much sense, why are three past trustee presidents, along with other former trustees, questioning the project?
Uncertainty about whether the trustees and Sharry are addressing real space needs concerns underlines many of the worries for those previously involved in library operations.

Gray said her question is how expansion became a top priority when it wasn’t listed as a need following public surveys that led to a long-range plan covering the years 2011-2016. During Town Meeting, she showed photographs of space that she believes is not being used, or not being used well, throughout the building.

In fact, Gray and others advocated for hiring a consultant to do a space needs study several years ago, though this was never funded.

Gray also questions whether there has been public feedback advocating for an expansion, something that has not been shown in discussions and votes at Town Meeting.

For former trustee Erikson, mixing together the space needs for existing services with the space needs for community services that could be provided elsewhere is creating tensions.

A teen center, a computer center and public meeting spaces, as well as community programs, might not need to be in the Jones.

But Sharry, library staff and library trustees counter that they are being advocates for many children and teens from low- and moderate-income families who don’t have constituencies speaking for them at Town Meeting.

Merrylees “Molly” Turner, who served as a past trustees president, said her worries center around whether an expansion and renovation will reduce the home-like feel of the library for patrons and damage the legacy of benefactor Samuel Minot Jones.

“There is a very large amount of square footage that could be used to better provide services,” Turner said. “I never imagined the trustees would disregard the legacy of the original building.”

And McKee said many people are concerned when they learn much of the 1990s addition might be demolished to make way for this project.

But this may be the only way to create a library that functions as a modern building should, Kuhn said, with a layout that is sensible to both those who work at the library and those who use it.

**Would the Jones consider moving if the building can’t be expanded?**

It is clear is that no matter what happens with the building project, the Jones Library will remain at its 43 Amity St. location.

A document prepared for the trustees by former Planning Director Jonathan Tucker in April 2015 shows that the current site remains the best because it is the “most central available site for a public library in Amherst” and has sufficient land to accommodate expansion to 100,000 square feet.

**Is there anything proponents and critics agree about?**

No one argues that the original 1928 building isn’t an attraction for Amherst center and
shouldn't be improved and modernized, in some ways. Even the concerns over finding room to serve teenagers seems to be common ground.

The questions appear to center on just how much space should to be added and what sort of renovation will occur.

**So what happens next with the library project?**

Sharry is promising to continue to have meetings of the building committee on a regular schedule that will provide updates to the community.

In the months ahead, she hopes more information will be provided and more questions will be answered.

"We are asking for people to keep an open mind," Sharry said.

Scott Merzbach can be reached at smerzbach@gazettenet.com.
Opinion > Letters (/Opinion/Letters/)

Gary Michael Tartakov: Find alternative to Jones Library expansion

Wednesday, June 08, 2016

I was just visiting the Jones Library. It is such a pleasure to pass by the Historical Society house, settled back at the end of its yard among the flowers, on its own lawn. There is a space between it and the library, so that each is a separate structure.

And then there is the library. Along with the Town Hall and its Romanesque-styled red brick and stone monumentality, the Jones Library is the most handsome building in Amherst. It presents an enjoyable view, no matter which side you approach it from. And like the Historical Society, it is handsome because you can see its full sculptural form, standing separate enough from the surroundings to take it in as a distinctive work of architecture.

I know that its design is not the original one, but largely a result of an expansion of the late 20th century. But that expansion managed not only to preserve the original structure’s main facades, but to complement them by maintaining the same scale and style, and fitting its original footprint and silhouette.

In my time in town I have seen how the need to develop the facilities of the Town Hall and Police Station (which was once housed in the Town Hall), resulted in building new facilities elsewhere in town.

Imagine what the Town Hall would look like with the Bangs Community Center stuck on top of it, or jutting off one corner. That might be gross, but, some architect could have designed a Romanesque-looking version of the Bangs Center and stuck that on top of it, or extended it out from the façade.
Now go to the library's website and take a look at the plans for adding a Bangs Center on its northwest corner. The result might be as handsome a melding of the old and the new, as sticking a Bangs Center onto the Town Hall.

But wouldn't even that be a lot like attaching one of Tom Brady's arms to the back of your shoulder? I mean, it would certainly enhance your throwing capabilities, but wouldn't it also make your look a little less comfortable to work with?

What is there about the town's library needs that could not be met better by redesigning some of the current structure's many unused interior spaces and locating some of the developing needs at another location?

Gary Michael Tartakov
Amherst

Gary Tartakov is an Amherst Town Meeting member.
Editorial: Rethinking basics of Jones Library project

Saturday, June 11, 2016

People planning an expansion of the Jones Library in Amherst are regrouping. Last month, they failed to win Town Meeting support for rezoning that would have given them more room on the back side of the downtown landmark.
The library's director, Sharon Sharry, says she plans soon to answer questions townspeople have about the project and provide more information. "We are asking for people to keep an open mind," she told Gazette reporter Scott Merzbach.

We think the building committee should embrace that openness by revisiting the need for an expansion of the magnitude proposed.

Today, it is clear, the Jones is struggling with a good problem: keeping up with its own popularity and meeting public expectations. The project now outlined would create more space for children's and teen programming and for collections by increasing the 67 Amity St. library's size from 47,000 to 68,000 square feet.

While the Jones could receive as much as $12.5 million in state support for the project, the town's share would come to more than $20 million.

On its own, that sort of investment in a more modern and spacious library might win town support.

But unfortunately, the Jones project is not the only one on the horizon. Amherst faces big-ticket projects for an elementary school expansion, a new Department of Public Works facility and a new firehouse. Add to those costs the need to continue to catch up with road repairs and other infrastructure improvements.

In their household budgeting, most families need to triage expenses, balancing bills and timing when they tackle home maintenance.

On the townwide level, it is hard to imagine, push come to shove, that Amherst residents can be persuaded to green light all the projects taking shape.

The Jones team has already made concessions, since some estimates say the library should be expanded to 100,000 square feet to properly serve a town that values learning as much as Amherst does.

And officials have been thinking outside the box by reaching out to a nonprofit neighbor, the Amherst Historical Society, about a partnership that would provide more room for the library expansion. The May 16 Town Meeting vote nixed a needed zoning change, though, limiting those options and making it more likely that any expansion would eat away at a memorial garden out back.

Now is a good time for Jones officials to consider their chances of getting residents to agree to back a $20 million project amid competing needs in town.

We see two particular hurdles: opposition from members of the vocal Save Our Library group and the fact that the project as envisioned would require that a major addition erected as recently as the 1990s be mostly taken down.
Its name aside (no one is proposing to demolish the library) the opposition group is making credible arguments that more space for programming and operations can be found within the existing building, including on the third floor. And many residents will think the town ought to get more use out of an addition that went up only 20 or so years ago.

The library team is right that it may not make great sense to invest in modest changes and repairs in a structure that is clearly too small for Amherst’s needs. Sharry estimates that $655,000 in repairs will be needed over the next five years. But there is a big difference between that figure and $20 million.

We applaud members of the Jones Library building committee for seeking to improve a vital community resource. It’s their duty to make the Jones the best library they can by angling for state and local support.

But timing may just not be on their side. Smaller, more focused renovations that address specific pinch points in the library and improve its utility to the public may be the better route.
Anne Herrington: Let Jones renovation plans continue

Tuesday, June 14, 2016

Let Jones Library renovation plans continue

As a frequent user of the Jones Library, I see the serious need for renovations, and I trust the library leadership and trustees to shepherd the town through deciding on the scope of those renovations. However, the misnamed “Save our Library” group seems to want to limit considerations to only those options that they favor, and they are using Town Meeting to this end.

I am reminded of the parking garage debacle of some years ago that left Amherst with a too small parking cellar instead of the larger parking garage we needed. Contrary to the claims of the “Save” group, I feel that the library has done a good deal to inform and involve the public. We should all heed Library Director Sharon Sharry and “keep an open mind,” stop trying to close off options and let the planning process continue.

Anne Herrington
Amherst
Commentary (/Commentary/)

Tamson Ely: Trust process on Jones expansion

By TAMSON ELY

Friday, June 17, 2016

The public libraries of Amherst, Deerfield and Hadley have embarked on planning and design work to apply for state library construction funds available every eight to 10 years. To secure these funds, a town must demonstrate that its library program and proposed building will serve the town for the next 20 years.

The librarians, library trustees and community members in these towns have been envisioning how they might renovate and expand their libraries to meet current and future needs.

South Hadley, Granby and Holyoke participated in the previous grant round and chose to invest in their libraries and residents. All three saw a dramatic increase in use of their expanded libraries.

Amherst's Jones Library is a regional anchor, being loved and heavily used by residents of the town, neighboring communities and visiting scholars. But its building is plagued by leaks, poor insulation, failing HVAC and a confusing room layout. It desperately needs renovation and expansion to meet current and future needs. Many design meetings, open to the public, have been held by trustees, staff and architects. Opponents of any change cite their familiarity with the library to justify their reasoning why the current space is sufficient, yet they oddly ignore the Jones librarians, who stress its many inadequacies.
One former Jones trustee, who opposes any changes, wrote to staff seeking their views on the proposed renovation and expansion. Five department heads sent heartfelt replies detailing why their departments have insufficient space to help children, teens, ESL students and their tutors, and researchers using special collections, and why there were not enough seats, tables, study rooms and meeting rooms.

These dedicated professionals indicated how they would use more space and how excited they were at the prospect of better serving the community. However, none of their information was presented to Town Meeting. Instead, expansion opponents showed rooms in the Jones where supposedly things might be better organized, and Town Meeting members even suggested that the library split its operations and staff between the East Street School and the Jones!

Most of the outspoken opponents to any changes to the Jones are not willing to wait and see what the architects design. Therefore, at Town Meeting they automatically voted against what the trustees and town officials recommended.

However, by doing so they ignored the knowledgeable community volunteers who worked and continue to work countless hours on architectural issues, space needs, community needs and greenspaces.

And most significantly, the library opponents did not take into account the most needy in our community who depend heavily on the library and its services and programs, including the homeless who spend considerable time in the library reading magazines and newspapers and using computers. Unfortunately, these people are not represented in Town Meeting so have no voice in the decision about the library's future.

I am a retired college library director who has worked 40 years in libraries, the last 28 as a community college library director. I worked at Harvard and MIT before moving here, where I chose to work in a community college in order to serve a diverse student body.

I am deeply offended by people who suggest that they know better than experienced librarians how to operate a library and to assess critical space needs. The librarians who work at the Jones deserve respect, but instead they have been shown disrespect in the current Amherst Town Meeting and other meetings.
As a trustee of the Jones Library, I have witnessed this disrespect for the hard work, dedication and judgment of the Jones director and the staff. Librarians do not tell lawyers how to prosecute a case or professors how to teach; we respect their expertise, and we ask that Town Meeting members and all Amherst residents respect the expertise of librarians as well.

In Deerfield, residents support their library and trust the process to see what kind of design might develop for their town. I urge all Amherst residents to do the same -- have patience, respect the planning and design process and bring an open mind to architectural designs when presented to the community.

Finally, the debate about libraries should center on those in our communities who most need vital and expanded library services and programs. In essence, the debate is not about library trustees, past or present, nor about Town Meeting process. Please consider young families, teens, immigrants and the less advantaged among us when assessing what a renovated and expanded Jones Library might provide and the positive impact it would have on their lives in the next 20 years.

Tamson Ely has been an Amherst resident since 1982. She is a current Jones Library trustee and former director and dean of library services at Springfield Technical Community College.
News > Local (/News/Local/)

Tuesday meeting for Jones Library project

By SCOTT MERZBACH
Staff Writer

Friday, June 24, 2016

AMHERST — Department heads and other staff at the Jones Library will discuss their needs for improving programs and adding space to the building during an information session on the proposed building renovation and expansion (http://www.gazettenet.com/Archives/2016/02/amlibupdate-hg-021216) project Tuesday.

The meeting will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the Woodbury Room, located on the lower level of the 43 Amity St. building.

Library Director Sharon Sharry said that staff will give an overview of the improvements they are seeking in the building, while Finegold Alexander Architects of Boston, Kuhn Riddle Architects of Amherst and project manager Colliers International of Hartford will discuss how to balance staff program needs and resident concerns about costs in a 68,000-square-foot building.

There will be time set aside for questions and answers.

Unlike the previous session held in May (http://www.gazettenet.com/Numerous-questions-voiced-about-Jones-Library-project-2053570), during the afternoon when many people were working, the hope is more families will attend.

Staff at the library will be providing childcare at the Crafts Room, also located on the lower level.

Play-Doh will be available for children from birth through 5-years-old in the Crafts Room, while those 6-years-old and up will be offered Legos to play with outside the Crafts Room.

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Program needs driving expansion, Jones Library staff say

By SCOTT MERZBACH  
Staff Writer  

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AMHERST — Space for toddlers, elementary school-age children and teenagers would more than double in a proposed expansion and renovation of the Jones Library.

For Rebecca Fricke of Railroad Street, the current limitations, with just 600 square feet dedicated to young adults, mean her two teenage daughters haven’t often used the library in recent years.

“One area I’m glad you’re focusing on is the teen area,” said Fricke, speaking Tuesday evening during a presentation on a 68,125-square-foot building proposal at a Jones Library Feasibility Committee meeting.

But some of what is being offered in the children’s and young adult areas of the library appears to duplicate the town’s Leisure Services and Supplemental Education department activities, said Rita Burke of Henry Street.

“Why are we providing yoga and arts and crafts?” Burke asked.

The meeting, which drew more than 40 residents, was an opportunity for library staff to explain how the current plan to add more than 20,000 square feet to the 47,420-square-foot building is being driven by program needs identified by staff.

The area for youth and young adults, specifically, would increase from 4,400 square feet to 9,300 square feet, with Mia Cabana, head of youth services, explaining there is limited room for shelving children’s books and for parents to park strollers.

James Alexander, principal at Finegold Alexander Architects of Boston, said the challenge is to take these program needs and translate them into a real, physical form for a project that will be submitted in January to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners for funding.

“That’s what we’ve tried to do in listening to the staff and examining the building,” Alexander said.

In addition to adding space, any project will reduce the complexities in navigating through the 1990s expansion, Alexander said.
But even with several department heads explaining their rationale for more space, skeptics, including Vincent O’Connor of Summer Street, said they need to see written explanations for each program need before they can endorse the project.

The project, with cost estimates of around $32.5 million, would receive up to $12.5 million in state support, with the remainder coming from the town. If the state backs the project, it will be brought before Town Meeting next year.

Library Director Sharon Sharry acknowledged that there are inefficiently used spaces within the current building, but not enough to provide room for the program needs.

“In a perfect world we would not need any more square footage,” Sharry said, noting that the professional librarians on staff have been shielding patrons from the various problems.

Sharry said improving the youth and young adult sections is vital.

“I would argue the children’s department is the most important department in any library,” Sharry said.

Austin Sarat, president of the Jones Library trustees, said the vision is to have an expanded and renovated library that remains at the core of Amherst’s life.

“We want the library to be an inclusive space for everyone in the community,” Sarat said.

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