

JONES LIBRARY

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October 22, 2020

TO: Community Preservation Act Committee
FROM: Sharon Sharry, Director, Jones Library
RE: Jones Library Revised Community Preservation Act Application

The Jones Library's revised application speaks for itself, but, because there are three new members of the Community Preservation Act Committee, it might save some time during tonight's presentation to provide in writing a brief bit of additional context:

HISTORY OF THIS APPLICATION

- The Library's first application was submitted last December. It was for part of the cost of the Special Collections facility in a larger proposal to renovate and expand the Library. These Collections, among the most valuable historic assets of the Town, are at risk in their present location, and a facility adequate to protect them was planned to be located in the successor addition to the original 1928 building. The Library's application was contingent upon approval of that larger project by the Town Council. The cost of this Special Collections facility, for which part funding was sought, was estimated as a fraction of total cost of the larger project.
- The Town's Historical Commission recommended a CPA grant of \$1M, to be financed by bonding, and this Committee preliminarily voted such an award
- Because of the unusual nature of this request several members of the CPA Committee expressed concern about the legality of such a grant, and the Town obtained a clear opinion of its attorneys that it was permissible.
- The CPA Committee, however, remained concerned that the computation of the award – and the use of the funds – might include other expenses of the project that were not for historic preservation, and asked the Library to come back with a revised proposal clarifying these points
- In the meantime, subsequent changes in the schematics for the larger project moved the Special Collections facility into the original 1928 Jones Library Building, itself one of the Town's most valuable historic assets
- The Library obtained a professional estimate of the costs of this adaptation of the original building, and it is attached to the application
- This application, therefore, is for a project that both preserves the historic assets represented by the documents and artifacts in the Jones Special Collection, and rehabilitates the historic Library building to serve the purposes for which it was built.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- On October 15, the Trustees formally requested the Town Council to approve the larger project by April of next year. At the latest, next July, the Massachusetts Board of Library

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Commissioners will offer the Town an award of \$13.8M, and a decision **MUST** be made by the end of next year. Without such approval, the Town will lose these funds. This adds to the urgency of our application and this project. Your action will be a critical part of the Council's decision next spring or whenever it takes up the larger project.

- Furthermore, the risks to the Special Collections historic assets have become more urgent. You have undoubtedly read about the considerable damage sustained by them last winter because of a leak in the HVAC system – a leak that, because of the obsolete nature of the system, cannot be repaired. This is in addition to the risks they regularly face by being stored under circumstances that are not secure or climate controlled.
- In addition, the Jones Library building, at the center of the Town, is one of a few buildings that are universally recognized as essential to its history. That building is in desperate need of attention, and is not usable for the purposes for which it was constructed. By rehabilitating part of it to hold these Special Collections, the Town can save that building to continue to play that role.
- The collaborative nature of the funding for the larger project – state, Town and private support – give a CPA grant the kind of leverage rarely seen. Two major historic preservation objectives can be achieved with a grant of only a fraction of their cost.
- The Library's revised application provides the information requested by the CPA Committee to re-visit and re-affirm its grant of \$1 million.

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