

# JONES LIBRARY

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NORTH AMHERST LIBRARY • MUNSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

September 12, 2022

To: Amherst Town Council

From: Farah Ameen, Lee Edwards, Tamson Ely, Alex Lefebvre, and Austin Sarat, Members of the Jones Library Board of Trustees

RE: Jones Library Building Project

We are writing to reaffirm our continuing support for the building project. We believe that the plan developed after years of study, consultation, and support from the residents of Amherst offers the most prudent way forward.

Despite careful stewardship, the Jones building is in dire need of attention. Systems are well past their end of life and as a result are failing and are beyond a simple repair. Our wonderful staff is forced to cope without adequate space or the necessary infrastructure to do their jobs. And, most important, all of the library's patrons deserve a facility that is safe and can serve them well.

Before the start of the building project, the Jones Library Trustees considered a renovation and reorganization within the existing footprint. They concluded that such an approach would not meet the needs of the library if it is to serve everyone in our community equally. With the Town Council the Trustees reviewed the minimum cost for a repair of the building that would allow the library to continue to operate safely. We determined that it would cost the town as much or more to complete the minimum necessary repairs as to finance an addition and renovation of the kind we are now planning. None of this has changed, except that costs for both the necessary repair work and the renovation and expansion have escalated.

Costs have escalated in library construction projects across the state, and we hope that state government agencies will recognize this situation and offer additional financial support. Meantime, we have an energetic and effective fundraising effort in place as well as the support of our state and federal representatives as we seek additional funding opportunities. We have already seen the fruits of the Capital Campaign Committee's work as they have raised almost 50% of their original goal a full 9 months ahead of schedule. The library's legions of friends and supporters have been incredibly generous. And, as you know, we have pledged to backstop the fundraising so as to minimize any risk to the Town. We have said repeatedly that supporting the building project is necessary to equally support all members of our community. Children as well as teens, native speakers of English and those learning English, people who are economically advantaged and people who have been economically

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disadvantaged, people without physical disabilities as well as people with physical disabilities, neurotypical individuals and neurodiverse individuals all will be better served by the newly renovated and expanded building. Our library, like all libraries, is a critical piece of our community's social infrastructure and we must invest in that infrastructure to support its role as a crossroads for the community and a cornerstone of democracy.

We were pleased that the JLBC's voted to support continuing the work on the project through design development and preparation of construction documents. We think that is the right decision and we hope you will agree.

Stopping or pausing now will only lead to greater costs when needed work gets done. Amherst needs and deserves a first class facility for its first class library.

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September 12, 2022

To: Amherst Town Council

From: Jones Library Board of Trustees

RE: Jones Library Building Project Approved Motions

The following motions were approved during the Board of Trustees meeting held on Monday, September 12, 2022:

\* **MOTION:** That the Trustees of the Jones Library, Inc. enter into an agreement with the Town of Amherst:

(1) to enable the renovation and expansion project to be continued at least through the construction bidding process;

(2) in the event a decision is made not to proceed with the project when the construction bidding process is completed, the Trustees will reimburse the town for the cost incurred in design development and preparing construction documents up to a specified amount or pledge to invest the equivalent of that amount at least for HVAC, roof repairs, and/or other necessary capital improvements at the Jones Library or identify some other means to ensure that the costs to the town are otherwise covered;

(3) that this the agreement will specify the time period for the completion of any payment to the town, investment by the library in capital improvements, or other means to ensure that the costs are otherwise covered. *(Approved 6-0)*

\* **MOTION:** To rescind August 22, 2022 motion [MOTION: To enter a new agreement with the Town pledging the value of the endowment to help fund the Jones Library building project. *Approved 5-0 (Pam – No)*] in favor of this new Agreement. *(Approved 6-0)*

\* **MOTION:** That the Trustees of the Jones Library endorse efforts by the Town of Amherst to coordinate with other towns to secure additional state and other government funding to help cover inflation related cost increases of library building projects above their previously budgeted amounts. *(Approved 6-0)*

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**Meeting of the Jones Library, Inc., and the Town Libraries' Board of Trustees**  
**August 22, 2022 5:00 p.m. meeting conducted via Zoom webinar**

Members Present: Austin Sarat, Lee Edwards, Farah Ameen, Alex Lefebvre, Tamson Ely, Lee Edwards, and Bob Pam  
Also Present: Sharon Sharry, and members of the public and Councilors Bahl-Milne, Griesemer, and Miller (12 attendees)

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1. Meeting called to order at 5:01 p.m.
2. Jones Library Building Project Update/Discussion

JLBC Update

2 meetings ago voted to ask TM to sign off on moving the project forward to its next two phases, Design Development and Construction Documents. The Finance Committee had a preliminary discussion. Town Council is having a discussion tonight. There will be a subsequent meeting of the Finance Committee and Town Council. At the last meeting of JLBC we were told by the Town Manager that it would be a matter of weeks rather than months before the project could move forward. Expressed hope that project move forward as expeditiously as possible.

JLBC voted a series of value engineering proposals to reduce the cost of project (vetted by Design Committee and OPM). Current savings is \$1.9M. Additionally there is a possibility of another \$1M in FF&E. Among the cuts voted is the elimination of the sawtooth roof design on the addition. Satisfied elimination would not have impact on sustainability goals of the library. Value engineering was guided by two main principles 1) maintain integrity of the program 2) not substantially alter the architectural vision of the proposal.

Noted that one additional value engineering cut was approved, the synthetic slate on the 1928 building but that we are still waiting on the estimated cost savings for that measure.

Paused discussion to ask for Public Comment

3. Public Comment - None
4. Jones Library Building Project Update/Discussion continued

Discussions with the State for additional funds

The Library Director is working on efforts to coordinate with other towns that have library projects that have been adversely impacted by the cost escalations seen in Amherst. Believe the Trustees need to actively speak to, support and endorse these efforts.

There are 14 libraries (13+ Amherst) experiencing this shortfall due to escalation of costs. 9 have been given provisional awards by MBLC and 5 are still on the wait list. The effort to address the cost escalations among the libraries began with a letter from Deerfield that Amherst signed off to the governor asking for ARPA funds to offset the escalations.

The Library Director met with Senator Comerford and Representative Domb as well as Town Council President Lynn Griesemer, where it was decided to take these efforts to the next level. Librarians will continue to talk with other librarians and town legislators talk to town legislators, state legislators to each other and bring to Ways and Means.

Our project was the largest project awarded and our increase in cost is at 38%. Comparatively other libraries are seeing much higher increases. Deerfield is at 56% Westborough 56% Orange 57 Seekonk at 55%.

**MOTION:** That the Jones Library Trustees endorse the efforts of the town leadership to coordinate with other towns to secure additional state funding to help cover the costs of building projects above their previously budgeted amounts. *(Approved 6-0)*

Believe completion of building project is one of the most important things that needs to be accomplished. Vision of the libraries that are to be funded are being undermined by the cost escalation.

What are the sizes of the other projects compared to ours? Original costs for Deerfield \$7.8M. Gloucester \$28.4M, Seekonk \$24.9M.

Comment that the legislature is not currently in session; will this impact the way TC and TM think about the project? It is an issue of construction across the state rather than just about libraries. Domb and Comerford said the timing is perfect because the legislature is not in session and that gives legislators a chance to talk to each other. Also, construction bids would be roughly summer of 2023. So multiple opportunities to pursue.

What is unique is that these Towns have approved these grants, meaning they have approved and appropriated funding and then experienced escalation.

Comment that it is believed these awards by the MBLC are funded as a bond authorization – talking about them increasing the amount they are offering in these bond issues?

MOU that created the capital campaign committee

The Friends Committees have done an outstanding job. Have gone above and beyond in their efforts. Two items of note in the in the MOU. These are being raised not to discourage any activity by the capital campaign committee, but wanted to make note that it states, 'undertake the private fundraising campaign'. Very much appreciate all of the work done with state and local agencies. Agreed an income and expense report would be sent monthly and would like to make sure we are seeing those reports monthly.

**MOTION:** That the Library Trustees send the following letter to the TC (letter read aloud by Chair) on behalf of any of the Trustees who wish to sign it. *Motion Tabled.*

MBLC puts out a handbook for Trustees and is the job of Trustees to be advocates for the library. In adopting the motion just passed, believe doing what we should be doing; being the most vocal advocates in the community for what we believe are the needs of the library. There are many new Town Councilors since the project was last voted and feel it is important to restate our advocacy for the project.

If we proceed through to bid phase, it is expected to be roughly \$2M. Believe if project is cancelled cannot go back to MBLC any time this decade. Will need to discuss what are the alternatives. Stopping now, continue through bidding (believe if Design Development cost estimate is the same – should we proceed)

Believe it is important for Trustees to show their support. No Trustee is taking these decisions lightly, it is a very important project for us to move forward for our community and for town. Concerned that the MLBC will not likely consider Amherst in the future. Don't believe band aid fix will fix anything.

The head of the MBLC wrote a letter, have been pretty patient with Amherst and likely not going to want to work with us in the future. Issues with the building are dating back to 2012. The Library has attempted to address issues throughout the year through JCPC and its own budget to attempt to address.

George Hicks was unable to attend this evening's meeting, the Chair of B&F requested that he share some detailed information specific to the HVAC systems to make sure the Trustees and the public have a solid understanding of the current state of the systems. There are many more and costly issues in the building, but this is currently our highest priority as it is the most likely to lead to closure of the building if we don't have heat or ac.

### **Gas fired boilers**

The 4 gas fired boilers are still operational. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) lists the life expectancy of steel boilers at 24-25 years. Ours are 32 years old and well past their life expectancy. Fortunately, the boilers themselves are still serviceable at this time and one of the least troublesome components of the HVAC system. Any heat breakdowns are almost always attributed to the pneumatic controls or the failing circulation pumps (we have 4; 2 are currently not operational. They all work in tandem and having only 2 does not keep the system from doing its job, but it leaves us vulnerable if there is a failure).

### **Repairing/replacing the parts of the building-wide HVAC system most prone to failure**

The Library has a service contract in place for its systems; all normal wear items (belts, seals, filters etc.) are serviced quarterly. If there are worn out items, they are generally replaced.

There are two factors that make it important to do a complete replacement/retrofit: The core components are beyond their 25-year life expectancy. Motors, pumps, fan coils, etc. The HVAC system in this building is extremely complex and because the 1920's structure is heated/cooled with fan coil units and the 1990's addition is heated/cooled with perimeter radiators and forced air. All of the components are aged out of their life expectancy. Changing motors and pumps will only be a band-aid when the infrastructure (pipes, metal housings, etc.) are also aged past their life expectancy. Corrosion, metal fatigue, etc. are all contributing factors to the many emergency repairs we have made the past several years.

The entire system, with the exception of Special Collections, is controlled with pneumatics (air, air hoses and air valves to simplify). Every component relies on the pneumatic system to operate correctly. Pneumatics are no longer used in new construction. Replacement parts are difficult to find. The techs are untrained on them, and we rely on the one or two older techs who understand them to keep us running. Most of the failures and service calls we have had in the last several years are related to the pneumatic controls failing. Over ten years ago, a study was performed using JCPC funds to research what it would cost to design a replacement control system for the building. The cost was over \$250k and it was decided to retrofit Special Collections only, as it was the most critical.

### **Insulate the building and decrease the energy load**

The Library completed an insulation upgrade to both the 1920's structure and the 1990's addition within the last ten years (partially funded by Eversource). At the time, it was determined that we did everything we could that would have a ten year or less payback in efficiency savings. There is no low hanging fruit here when it comes to insulation. The Library replaced most the lighting in the building with LEDs, also partially funded by Eversource and saw immediate savings.

A member of our sustainability committee who is an engineer further clarified that the existing building cannot simply be converted to heat pumps, given its inefficiency and the required size of the equipment. He further stated that heat pump boilers aren't really a reality in the commercial marketplace yet, and just barely in residential sizes. And even there it's not a plug-and-play option, the lower water temperature requires a major reconfiguration of the distribution.

### **Replacing the Special Collection HVAC system**

Replacing the system will not change the fact that it is above the archives. Even if Special Collections were redesigned, that space will always be in danger of being flooded. There is no alternative space to put HVAC equipment to service the Special Collections space.

### **Re-engineering the atrium**

Unfortunately, the atrium has had issues since its original construction and the Library has spent a great deal of time and money attempting to resolve the issue. Changing or enlarging the atrium in an attempt to eliminate the leans would require it to be raised above the height of the 1920's structure and violate Historic Preservation Restrictions. Because of the compound angles of the different roofs connected by the atrium, there is no way to eliminate valleys. Because there are HVAC vents running around the perimeter, any redesign of the atrium will require some HVAC redesign.

Appreciation expressed for providing information specific to certain questions that had been posed about the probability of the changes above. Would like to know where things stand on capital campaign.

The Capital Campaign Committee submitted to Finance Director a fundraising plan with benchmarks. Currently \$3.1M in pledges. Benchmarks:

- September 2023 \$5.3M
- December 2023 \$6.3M
- December 2024 ~\$8.4M
- December 2025 ~\$9.8M
- December 2026 ~\$14M

Noted that the process of cultivating donors has been occurring and continues to occur. Good fortunate of two co-chairs of our capital campaign committee that are incredibly experienced in fundraising. Have retained experts on fundraising. Have recruited a committee of people somewhat experienced in fundraising. Have a long-time horizon to realize fundraising goals. Have already seen opportunities that were not previously known.

Chair of Development read the following statement:

You are asking for a risk-free certainty I cannot give you.

That is the nature of private philanthropy - you cast a lot of nets, with no certainty of the numbers, quantity, or timing of those which will be successful. Philanthropic giving is not a predictable event. It is not required, like taxes, and there is a lot more to getting those gifts than asking for them. It is necessary to cultivate trust, knowledge/familiarity, and deep engagement – and the timing must be right - to move someone to make the largest gift of a decade. Most 6 or 7-figure gifts require 18-24 months to secure. An institution mounting its first campaign requires this kind of constituent cultivation that only time can provide. All of these considerations are no different from those any non-profit faces with a major campaign. Our efforts have just begun, but, so far, the responses have been very promising. And a firm commitment by the Town to the project certainly helps.

**MOTION:** That the Trustees of the Jones Library, Inc. enter into an agreement with the Town of Amherst:

(1) to enable the renovation and expansion project to be continued at least through the construction bidding process;

(2) in the event a decision is made not to proceed with the project when the construction bidding process is completed, the Trustees will reimburse the town for the cost incurred in design development and preparing construction documents up to a specified amount or pledge to invest the equivalent of that amount at least for HVAC, roof repairs and/or other necessary capital improvements at the Jones Library or identify some other means to ensure that the costs to the town are otherwise covered;

(3) that this the agreement will specify the time period for the completion of any payment to the town, investment by the library in capital improvements or other means to ensure that the costs are otherwise covered. *(Approved 6-0)*

Seeking to tell the Town that we want to reach an agreement with the town that will assure that if the project goes forward and \$1.8M is spent and project goes to bid and after full and ample consultation with trustees it is decided not to go forward – 3 options – reimburse the town, take the costs and instead commit to using for capital improvements, or identify some other means. Believe the best course would be to agree that we would take the equivalent the money the town spent and put it toward capital improvements. Believe we need to keep the options open, and the motion is to enter into an agreement.

What would negotiation look like and with whom? Chair and Library Director would conduct the investigations and keep the Board informed.

Would prefer to have an agreement with the town that says there are certain things that would happen in the future with respect to the immediate needs of the library and the town is agreeing to do them. Paying for the project to go out to bid is a separate question. The costing that the Finance Director has done assumes we get to bidding and there is a second cost estimate after Design Development and might offer a second opportunity to decide if the project goes forward or does not without triggering the 75% of fees with the designers.

There are costs involved in trying to get firm number for the repair.

Appreciate the elegant solution of allowing the project to proceed to bid where there is price certainty and a little more time to continue to fundraise and look at how conversations with the state go with our legislators. If the project does not proceed once there is price certainty, the additional cost incurred to get to the bid phase would be deducted from the town's cost to repair or proceed in a different manner while also providing the library time to raise those funds through CPA grants or other means.

It was noted that 4 trustees expressed a preference for the second option of pledging to invest the amount to bid into the building if the project does not proceed versus the first and third options.

**MOTION:** To rescind the Motion passed on August 22, 2022, whereby we voted in favor of entering a new agreement with the town pledging the value of the endowment to help fund the Jones Library building project. *(Approved 6-0.)*

The total cost of the project is not yet certain, and the motion just passed provides a path forward to work with the town to move the project through to a price certain. Once the bids have been received, we will know the actual cost of the project, the funds raised to that point and hopefully the results of the efforts of our local legislators to work with the MBLC and the state for additional funds due to the escalation of costs. At that point in time, the Trustees can reconvene to determine the amount of any new agreement needed with the town.

*Motion taken off the table.*

**MOTION:** That the Library Trustees send the following letter to the TC (letter read aloud by Chair) on behalf of any of the Trustees who wish to sign it. *(Approved 5-1. Pam – no)*



Noted that the letter will come from the Trustees who voted in the affirmative on the letter. Names of those who voted yes, members of the Board of Trustees.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Alex Lefebvre

DRAFT

# Massachusetts Libraries

## BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS

mass.gov/mblc

August 31, 2022

Ms. Sharon A. Sharry, Library Director  
Jones Library, Inc.  
43 Amity Street  
Amherst, MA 01002

Dear Sharon:

This letter is in response to a request for documentation regarding the administration of grant funds, specifically the timing of milestone payments. The MBLC's fiduciary responsibility in regard to the disbursement of state taxpayer funds and the financial health of the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP) are paramount in decisions affected by extenuating circumstances.

As you know, the MBLC has accommodated the requests of the Jones Library, Inc. and the town of Amherst since prior to offering Amherst a provisional award, when your leadership asked to delay the grant award by a fiscal year due to the pandemic. We further accommodated the needs of the Library and Town when legal issues impacted the acceptance of the grant. The MBLC withheld the first disbursement after the execution of the grant contract with the Town until the referendum assured legal approval of the award by the Town Council and the community. Currently, it has come to our attention that Amherst's path forward with the Jones Library project may be blocked if the bidding process results in costs beyond the Town and Library's financial capacity. This prompted a question on your behalf about the return of grant funds with interest, which is clearly outlined in the assurances for the program.

Decisions regarding the delay of a milestone payment are not made lightly. Our building specialists, management team, and the Commissioners on our construction committee have discussed the situation presented by Amherst. The MPLCP will not be issuing a second payment to the Town of Amherst until the Town signs a contract with a general contractor and secures a building permit. We have been as flexible as possible with your project to assist the Town in its fiduciary responsibility to its taxpayers. The same flexibility is warranted for the fiduciary responsibility our agency has to the Commonwealth's taxpayers.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



James Lonergan  
Director