

**Town of Auburn
Board of Selectmen and Board of Library Trustees
Workshop Meeting
July 20, 2021**

Selectmen Present: Keith Leclair Todd Bedard and Michael Rolfe

Trustees Present: Nancy Mayland, Elizabeth Michaud and Marilyn Cavanaugh, Trustees; and Cindy Berling, Alternate Trustee

Also Present: Library Director Kathryn Growney, Parks & Recreation Coordinator Amy Lachance and Town Administrator William Herman.

Mr. Leclair called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm

Review Work to Date of Library Consultant

Since being engaged in the fall of 2020, Library Consultant Patience Kenney Jackson has been working with the Library Trustees and administration and staff of the library on a needs assessment for the Griffin Free Public Library, as well as detailed area description for each area of the library. This effort is intended to assist the Town in developing potential plans for an expanded library facility and community center.

Library Director Kathryn Growney provided the Selectmen with an update concerning the total circulations of the library (physical and electronic excluding databases); total physical material circulation by month; program attendance and the number of active patrons of the library. She also outlined the current physical structure of the library which includes three main rooms built in 1895 when the Town had a population of 620, and an additional room and support area that was built in 2000 when the Town's population totaled 4,682. In 2021, the Town's population is approximately 5,600.

In developing the needs assessment for the Griffin Free Public Library, the consultant assembled a library holdings and circulation comparison of 15 other New Hampshire libraries in communities whose population is close to Auburn's, ranging from a low of 4,140 to a high of 6,244. The 2019 data secured through the NH State Library indicates the average square foot space of these municipal libraries is 6,883 or 1.28 sf per capita. The total items in collections were 33,064 with a total circulation of 33,243 and children's circulation of 13,472. This data compared to Auburn's 1,940 total square feet or 0.35 sf per capita. The total items in collection is 16,809 with a physical circulation of 18,045 and circulation of children's materials of 10,515.

The Selectmen were presented with a copy of the "Building Needs Assessment and Library Building Program" report dated April 14, 2021 which provides a detailed description of what happens in each space of the library including appropriate furnishings; location within the building; what other services / spaces should be in close

proximity; any specific architectural features needed for the area, and the square feet necessary to house the specific space. In general terms, the report indicates the space for the library should total 7,025 square feet, while the space recommended for the community center space was 2,500 square feet.

Ms. Growney noted there was a lot of information and detail in the consultant's report, which the Trustees had seen an earlier version and worked with the consultant on some modifications they felt would make sense for Auburn. She indicated the consultant's job was to outline what is needed for a community of this size including some space for future growth, but it was felt that recommendation was likely too large for what might be supported locally. She indicated they did not change too much because they felt that was a discussion and decision to be made overall by the Town.

Nancy Mayland stressed there was a lot of data in the report and the Trustees felt the Board of Selectmen needed time to digest the information. The Trustees were not looking to make any type of decisions at this meeting. She stressed the report is very detailed in terms of space needs for each function or purpose within the library.

Mr. Leclair asked how many patrons the library had and Ms. Growney reported there were currently 3,500 library card holders of which 1,600 have been used at least once during the past year. She further indicated from an eyeball perspective, the belief is the largest segment of users are young families and retired individuals.

Mrs. Mayland noted the current space of the library is full of collections, furniture and equipment for operations which does not leave very much room for meeting room space. It was felt that was among the biggest drawbacks to the current library facility. Mrs. Mayland and Ms. Growney both stressed the library needs to involve the community with looking at the current operations and facilities to gain a recognition of their perception of the need and support for an expanded facility.

Mr. Leclair expressed a concern for potential overlapping of efforts with programs offered and managed by the Auburn Village School (AVS), Parks & Recreation and the Library. Ms. Growney indicated just the opposite is the case, that with limited resources, all three entities work together to ensure they are not attempting to do the same things, even though they may be reaching the same audiences. She further indicated the AVS and Library jointly use an online calendar system called Burbio which clearly prevents both entities from scheduling conflicting programs on similar dates. She indicated Parks & Recreation could also become a user of the program to further alleviate this concern.

Mr. Leclair asked if the Trustees had an estimated project number in terms of cost to construct a new facility. Mrs. Mayland indicated they really do not and felt it was way too soon to be talking numbers. General discussion led to an estimation that current construction costs are ranging between \$310 and \$500 per square foot. With an approximate 10,000 square foot facility, the likely price tag would be upwards of \$5 million.

Mrs. Mayland noted it could potentially be that much, but reported the Trustees are anticipating organizing a major fund-raising campaign to raise as much as half the anticipated project cost. She indicated they do not expect the taxpayers to foot the bill for the whole expense and they will be invested in the project before proposing it formally for the Town's consideration.

Mr. Bedard said he was truly on a listening effort to take in as much information and thoughts on this effort as possible. He noted his family have been users of the library as their children were growing and stressed his belief and support in the need for a community center facility to meet the needs of various ages and organizations.

Mr. Leclair also suggested they be looking at the overall operational costs for a larger facility. From his experience with proposing a building project for the Auburn Village School, that is a large part of the discussion with the public, not just the construction costs. Mr. Rolfe asked whether there were any grants available for this type of project. Ms. Growney reported there are not many available for construction and a few that did exist, Auburn did not qualify for due to the Town exceeding various financial standards. However, there would be grants applied for other things like computers, equipment, furniture and the like.

Mr. Leclair asked what sort of timing the Trustees were looking at for a potential project. It was suggested the design of a project could occur in 2022, fund-raising would take place between 2022 and 2024, and a project might be ready to go to a Town Meeting vote in 2024.

Discussion of Future Steps

Moving forward, Mrs. Mayland and Ms. Growney reported the library had a community survey ready to go the public and were planning to kick that off during the Duck Race event on September 11th. With information from the consultant and the community survey, it was felt the next steps for 2022 were funding conceptual architectural drawings for a facility, followed by the holding of a community focus group session similar to what the school district and Parks & Recreation did a few years ago.

Fund-raising and public awareness efforts such as having conceptual drawings available for public inspection at AVS events, the Library, Eddows Field, Concerts in the Park and other venues would help outreach with the public. Also, use of the Auburn Village Crier and existing social media sites for greater distribution of information and public outreach.

The results of all these efforts will determine the timing for advancing a formal proposal and bond issue to the voters.

Adjourn

Mr. Bedard moved to adjourn; Mr. Rolfe seconded the motion. All were in favor, the motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm

Respectfully submitted,

William G. Herman
Town Administrator