Why Should Town Meeting Approve the Library’s MAR Budget, a budget that is $81,000 less than level services?

Because the Library’s MAR (Municipal Appropriation Requirement) budget is the bare minimum needed by law to maintain Amherst’s public library State Certification with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

The Finance Committee’s Recommendation ($35,000 less) could LOSE Amherst’s State Certification.

When a Mass. public library loses certification¹....

1. The noncertified municipality and its library will receive NO State Aid to Public Libraries monies (M.G.L. c.78, s.19A). For Amherst, this could mean a loss of almost $70,000 in State Aid. The libraries are counting on that state aid to arrive on March 1, 2010. The elimination of that money would result in an immediate cut from next year's budget.

2. Libraries in certified municipalities need not lend library materials to the library in the noncertified municipality (605 CMR 4.01 (6a)). The Library’s MAR budget already proposes cutting $76,000 for new acquisitions. With the MAR budget, therefore, our need for interlibrary loans will doubtless rise significantly. If Amherst’s libraries are decertified, Amherst residents would lose their interlibrary loan privileges.

3. Libraries in certified municipalities need not extend reciprocal library services, beyond in-library use of their materials, to residents of the noncertified municipality (605 CMR 4.01 (6b)). Amherst residents would be unable to borrow materials free of charge from public libraries in Northampton, Greenfield, or Springfield.

4. The library is not eligible to apply for grants under the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) program. Amherst would lose $11,250 of its grant money for ESL and Spanish programs.

¹ This information, minus the Amherst specific information, is from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners website: http://mblc.state.ma.us/grants/state_aid/faqs/sa_denial_of_cert.php. A community may apply for a waiver of the MAR. Yet there is no certainty that Amherst would receive one. Even more important, staff levels at the Jones, Munson, and North Amherst Libraries are already at barebones. More severe cuts, especially in these times of increasing demand, would gravely impair the libraries’ ability to meet our community’s needs. (Note: The total appropriation for the Library under the Library’s budget is $2,128,288 (approximately 70% of which is requested from Town tax funds) compared to the Finance Committee’s amount of $2,093,594.)
A Change in Book, DVD, etc. Acquisition Law Will Permit FY2010 Cuts
A change in state regulation will allow Amherst to cut $76,000 for new materials while maintaining state certification. Another cut, almost $5,000, is to a part-time position.

FY2010 MAR Budget Retains Previous Years’ Cuts
- Branch library hours remain reduced by one afternoon a week
- The full time position from Circulation remains eliminated
- Special Collections (Amherst History) remains closed on Saturday mornings
- Jones Library remains closed on Monday mornings, plus Sundays & evenings in summer
- English as a Second Language (ESL) Coordinator will not work in July and August
- Staffing cuts mitigated by an automated phone system remain in effect
- Staffing reductions for children’s activities remain in effect
- Computer technician remains at 30 hours a week rather than full-time
- 2 full time staff positions already reduced to part-time remain part-time

Yet -- Amherst library use is up! Amherst Libraries have 26,287 cardholders. Overall FY2009 borrowing is up 2% - 7,624 higher than last year. FY2008 public computer use signups were 44,659. FY2009 computer signups are up 5.5%, 2,447 more than last year.

Amherst’s Libraries Boost Amherst’s Economy!
- $1.00 in public library taxes = $5.50 in economic benefit (includes libraries serving as anchors for nearby businesses and patrons’ personal savings from use of libraries.) 2006 Univ. of N.C. study of Pennsylvania Public Libraries
- Only about 3.5 cents of every General Fund dollar goes to operate Amherst’s libraries.

Thank You for Supporting YOUR Amherst Libraries!
Questions? Contact Library Director Bonnie Isman at 259-3090 or Patricia Holland, Trustee President, at 549-1503. (printed 6/1/09)