

ARTICLE 23. Jones Library: Authorization for Grant (Jones Library Trustees)

To see if the Town will vote to approve a renovation and expansion project for the Jones Library and authorize the Board of Trustees of the Jones Library to apply for, accept, and expend funds from a Massachusetts Public Library Construction Grant which application is based on preliminary designs submitted to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. Passage of this motion does not commit the Town to appropriate funding as may be necessary to implement the grant.

Overview

Founded in 1921, the Jones Library quickly became one of Amherst's most vibrant and iconic institutions. Samuel Minot Jones' 1912 bequest of \$690,000 (\$16 million in today's dollars) enabled a town of 5,500 to build a Library that was regionally celebrated because it exemplified the central role these forward thinkers believed a Library should play in a community with Amherst's unique values and interests. The Jones was conceived as much more than a reading room and lending library – its 250-seat theater and art gallery welcomed all to Amherst's cultural and intellectual heart.

Today the Jones building cannot fulfill this vision and, in our increasingly diverse community of 39,000, it is unable to adequately meet 21st century library needs. The jumbled floorplan and lack of accessibility does not allow the 5,000 weekly visitors to move freely and enjoy quiet areas; and technological and other infrastructure systems are in need of complete upgrades.

This project seeks to restore the Jones Library to its central place in Amherst's communal life.

Why Expand?

1. **Growth of community demand:** The Library's circulation has increased close to 40% since the 1992 addition. The Jones attracts thousands of visitors to the community as well.
2. Libraries across the nation have been struggling to meet 21st century needs with 19th and 20th century resources. The goal of this plan is to provide our community with professionally recognized levels of infrastructure and service while preserving the historic integrity of our building and institution. Current space is inadequate in square footage and in layout: A top-to-bottom, function-by-function, comprehensive planning exercise (orchestrated by the MBLC) identified the spaces needed by each of the functions of the Library in order to meet the demands of the Town. Results were clear: the functions cannot be provided within the 47K square feet of the current building; the present plan calls for an increase to 65K square feet.
3. The MBLC has clearly stated that it is NOT willing to fund a project that has to be squeezed into the existing building because it cannot meet Town needs as defined by the comprehensive planning process.

The Proposal

An almost two-year, public planning process has resulted in a proposal that:

1. Better meets the needs of traditional borrowers, browsers, and readers, with more visible and efficient circulation services, and a variety of reading spaces more suitably placed than today.
2. Attracts the interest of the next generation of Library patrons.
 - ◆ **For CHILDREN:** The current spaces allocated to children's needs, whether for activities or simply reading aloud, are inadequate to meet demand. Almost 7,000 children attend activities annually, and parents frequently leave because all reading spaces in the rabbit-warren layout of the current building are already taken.
 - ◆ **For TEENS:** There is no space for teens, either to work on collaborative school projects or to gather when school buildings are closed. The Town should be eager to attract them to their own space in the Library, instead of to the streets or, *de facto*, to the unsupervised stacks of the basement of the current building.
3. Makes all of the services of the library ADA compliant and fully accessible to all, especially the stacks, which do not meet current ADA standards.
4. Provides the technology services needed by patrons in an Internet-era library. The Jones' computer terminals are regularly oversubscribed, reflecting the dramatic change in the ways knowledge is being shared and transmitted. Our computers are an especially important lifeline for Amherst's substantial population segment that cannot afford a computer/broadband at home.
5. Provides welcoming quarters for English learners through a lauded ESL program that meets the needs of a growing Amherst demographic speaking 25 languages in its school system.
6. Securely preserves and makes available the unique Frost, Dickinson and other Special Collections and Archives that are necessary for local scholars and attract visitors from around the world. Parts of the collection now lack proper climate control and security.
7. Preserves significant elements of the distinctive look and feel of the original 1928 building, while replacing the 1992 addition with spaces that are much more user-friendly for both patrons and staff.
8. Becomes substantially "greener," improving overall energy efficiency, and replacing an atrium that is too hot in the summer, too cold in the winter, and leaky year-round.
9. Provides the space and flexibility to allow the Library to become the community gathering place for which the 1928 building was celebrated.

First Floor Highlights

1. The Front Entrance will be made handicapped accessible.
2. The Side Entrance will be moved to the west side of the building, creating a campus-like effect with the Strong House.
3. The Adult Circulation Desk will be adjacent to the ILL Delivery Room and the Automated Materials Handling System, which will help lessen the need for increased staffing.
4. The Library's collection of musical instruments will be stored in the Robert Frost Safe, which will remain in its original location.
5. The Audio Visual materials will be in line of sight of the Adult Circulation Desk, so as to lessen the rate of theft.
6. The Young Adult Department will be located in the gorgeous 1928 theater.
7. All Children's services will be located on this floor, making it easy for families to access.
8. The Woodbury Meeting Room will almost double in size, will have windows, and can be used for meetings and events even when the Library is closed.
9. There will be a Gathering Area where people will be able to bring their own food and drink to enjoy while reading alone or talking with neighbors.
10. There will be a New Materials area for patrons who like to "grab and go."
11. There will be a space dedicated to the Friends' ongoing Book Sale, as well as a space to display the Library's sale merchandise.
12. The renovated building will feature one main staircase and one elevator. Both the staircase and the elevator will access all floors of the Library, making it easier for patrons to navigate the building.
13. The historical 1928 staircase will remain in its original location.
14. There will be Adult Restrooms on every floor of the Library.
15. There will be windows on every floor overlooking the Library's gardens.

Second Floor Highlights

1. The entire Adult Collection will be housed on this floor including fiction, nonfiction, and periodicals.
2. Reference services and four Group Study Rooms will be located on this floor.
3. Located in the original 1928 part of the building will be the Amherst Room and two large Adult Quiet Study Rooms. These rooms will contain original fireplaces and wood paneling.
4. The Receptionist, Business Manager, Library Director, and Reference staff offices will be located on this floor.
5. There will be windows overlooking the Library's gardens.

Ground Floor Highlights

1. ESL and the Literacy Project will be located on this level. The route patrons will take to access this department will be clearly labeled, so that non-English-speaking patrons will be able to find their way easily.
2. The entire Special Collections collection will be stored here, together, in a truly climate controlled space.
3. Special Collections Exhibits will be open to everyone during all Library open hours. No more need to be "buzzed in."
4. The Burnett Art Gallery will be easy to locate.

Historical Preservation

The Town and Library will continue to work with all required agencies including the Mass Historic and Amherst Historic Commissions and will continue to comply with all relevant regulations and standards.

The facts show we are:

1. Preserving the entire 1928 façade with a front street-view that preserves the original silhouette;
2. Restoring the prominence of the barrel vault ceiling and dormer windows of the original theater;
3. Restoring public access to the historic reading rooms on the second floor, once again providing quiet adult reading rooms not now available;
4. Preserving the size of the rooms on the west side of the entrance;
5. Preserving the front stairway.

Also to note:

1. The plan contains no specification for finishes, including materials for the building's exterior; the Library seeks to retain the woodwork and fireplaces of the original building (the Library currently has 11 fireplaces. Seven are located on walls that are currently proposed to remain; four are located on walls that are currently proposed to be removed.)
2. The architects have a proven record of respecting historic buildings, and the Trustees and Design Subcommittee are committed to preserving and restoring as much of the 1928 building as possible;
3. The Town's Historical Commission has been fully briefed on the proposal (in a public meeting) and raised no objections to it. (Note: the 1992 addition is not considered "historic");
4. Preservation Massachusetts, a statewide non-profit historic preservation organization dedicated to preserving the Commonwealth's historic and cultural heritage, declined a request to place the Library on a statewide list of historic resources at risk of being lost.

Kinsey Memorial Garden

On the advice of Town Meeting, 70% of the Kinsey Garden will be preserved, and the remaining 30% will be relocated to the front/sides of the Library. Also with Town Meeting recommendation, a Jones Library Gardens Advisory Committee will be formed to first design and then advise on all Library matters (content, sustainability, ongoing maintenance). The new gardens will, for the first time, be visible and accessible from the building.

Summary

The Board of Trustees of the Jones Library is asking Town Meeting to approve the submission of a construction grant application to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). The application was one of 33 submitted by libraries around the Commonwealth to MBLC in January 2017 and local government approval is a requirement for grant consideration. As in our case, most communities submit their proposals first and formally request local approval after submission.

1. There is no funding attached to this vote; a "yes" vote does not commit the Town to funding the project.
2. The *Building Program* (meaning the different amount of space allocated to different services such as Young Adult, Children, ESL, etc) will not change substantially after submission. The *Building Design* will continue to evolve (meaning room placements and shape, finishes- such as the materials used for the outside walls - furnishings, and gardens and landscaping). No aesthetic decisions have been made; the MBLC does not care about aesthetics, only about function. The building feel and look are entirely up to the community, to be addressed in the Design Development phase following the award of the grant.
3. A condition of a construction grant award from MBLC is that the Library should continue to offer a full array of services throughout construction. We will therefore seek and secure interim space for the duration of construction. Fortunately, we are able to increase hours at the branches, but we will also need another space large enough to house our collection and programs for 2 years. It will have to be handicapped accessible, and ideally on the bus route. This step is not optional and is part of the overall project budget.
4. We are seeking an estimate by an independent contractor to determine how much it would cost to fix all the deferred maintenance issues at the Jones if Town Meeting decides to not take advantage of the MBLC grant, should it be awarded.

Key Milestones

1. 1/26/17 – MBLC Construction Grant application submitted.
2. 5/10/17 – Town Meeting discusses and votes on Article 23.
3. 7/13/17 – MBLC Construction Grant Awards Announced – This will determine timing of design, construction and Town decision on funding.
4. 8/1/17 — Capital Campaign Fund Raising begins.
5. TBD – Request for Town funding.
6. TBD – Community-led Design Development process begins.