

April 25, 2024

Dear Town Meeting Member,

The Director of the Montague Public Libraries and the Libraries' Trustees submitted an article for consideration at this year's annual town meeting. The purpose of this letter is to provide information about Article 17 and the needs that it would address.

Every five to eight years, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) funds the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Grant Program (MPLCP). Towns that apply for this program must demonstrate that their current building no longer meets the needs of the community. To apply for the program, the town needs to pass an article that appropriates \$150,000 towards the planning and design phase of the grant program.

Here are 5 important things:

1. The Carnegie Library does not meet the current needs of the community due to its inaccessibility, its small size, and its lack of safe or adequate parking.
2. Expanding the library or building a new one would allow the library collections to more than double in size.
3. New spaces, such as small group meeting rooms, a large community room, a children's program room, a teen space, and separate computing and reading spaces would allow residents to meet, work, study, access needed services, read comfortably, learn technology skills, engage with their children and other families, hang out with other teens, and attend programs on subjects of interest.
4. The library director, the Library Trustees, and the Friends of the Library are committed to an open and transparent planning process that pays homage to Turners Falls' history and the aesthetic of Avenue A, regularly solicits feedback on the needs and desires of all Montague residents, and explores every option for constructing an improved space, whether that be expansion of the Carnegie Library, building new on 38 Avenue A, or picking up the library and moving it to 38 Avenue A.
5. An improved Carnegie Library does not mean that the branches will close or that their hours or services will be cut. (In fact, several projects have been recently completed or are in-process to maintain and improve the branches. This includes new windows, masonry repointing, and roof repair at Montague Center and new windows, doors, flooring, and painting at Millers Falls.)
6. The appropriated \$150,000 will be spent only if we are awarded the grant, else the appropriation will be returned to the town.

Montague residents tell us that the Carnegie Library is too small, inaccessible to people with limited mobility, and lacks safe parking. The Carnegie Library had 19,084 visitors last year. Those who visited asked 3,989 questions and checked out 52,792 physical items, including books, DVDs, and audiobooks. If the Carnegie Library were expanded, there would be accessible spaces for community programs, group meetings, individual study, leisurely reading, teen activities, children's story hours, and more.

Along with shops and restaurants, the Library contributes to a vibrant downtown.

The Libraries' Trustees and the Library Director are basing our application to the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program on the feedback that we've received from Montague residents. We still want to hear your suggestions, ideas, questions, and concerns.

Thank you for your consideration!

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