

April 11, 2011

Board of Selectmen
Town Hall
18 Main Street
Hopkinton, MA 01748

Dear Board of Selectmen:

We're writing to express concerns about the Library Expansion Project, and the rush to move forward to meet a deadline for grant money, rather than proceeding in a well thought out, deliberate manner. We were surprised that even our Town Boards rushed to submit letters of support for this project with so many important issues remaining unresolved (please see attached for details).

As recently as this past December, the Library Committee decided the best path forward was to build a new library behind Center School. When support for that plan waned, they quickly switched gears and submitted the grant to request funds for a massive addition to the existing library on a site that can't support the project. This was done over the course of just a few weeks to meet the January 27 grant deadline. They're proceeding in this direction despite the results of their own feasibility study (Johnson Roberts Associates) that concluded:

The existing library site, while in the downtown area, with good visibility, and the traditional location for a library, was determined to be too small to support the programmatic requirements and parking. The existing configuration of the library as extended into the church building, also made for complex visibility, security, and supervision issues within an expanded facility.

There is clearly a need to enhance our current library. In our discussions with friends and neighbors, we acknowledge the library as an important community resource and support making improvements to the existing building. However, we also have many questions about the purpose of the library expansion – is it to add meeting space? Are large meeting rooms suitable for a library? The consensus is that the scale of this project is inappropriate for the site, too expensive, and not necessary given the other options for meeting space in town. The library's own study indicated the existing site cannot support the programs and parking. A grant deadline isn't a good reason to rush forward on a project with long term budget implications such as this. We need to take a step back and determine what makes the most sense for Hopkinton.

Sincerely,

Jeff and Sue Hadley, 4 Hayden Rowe Street
Mike and Katie Roughan, 6 Hayden Rowe Street
Jim and Gayle Walker, 8 Hayden Rowe Street
Jonas and Jeri Berlin, 15 Hayden Rowe Street
Scott and Cori Brown, 16 Ash Street

Library Considerations

After reviewing the information made available by the library, we have developed a list of questions that we would like the Board of Selectmen to consider when deciding whether or not to support the articles at Town Meeting related to this project:

1. Scale of project

- a. Does it make sense to increase the library space by over 500% (4,300 sq ft to 26,568 sq ft) if the number of visitors increased only 6% from 2005 - 2010?
- b. The scale of the building is much too large for the lots, and will change the character of the residential neighborhood of historic homes around the library.
- c. What is the ratio of the building footprint to square footage of the lot?

2. Meeting space

- a. The Library Committee has emphasized that one of the primary purposes of the expanded library is to provide additional meeting space. Is this an important function of a library?
- b. The library design includes a meeting room for 150 people (documents vary between 110 seats and 150 seats), but includes only 21 dedicated on-site parking spaces. That doesn't make sense.
- c. Is it a good use of town resources to fund this additional meeting space when there is existing meeting space in town:
 - i. Schools have significant meeting space and ample parking.
 - ii. Town Hall has meeting space.
 - iii. Fire Dept. has meeting space on the 2nd floor and parking.
 - iv. Police Dept. has meeting space on the 2nd floor.
 - v. Senior Center has meeting space and parking. This space is available many weekdays before 4:00pm, every weekday after 4:00pm, and all day every weekend.

3. Parking/Traffic

- a. The MBLC grant requires 66 parking spots for a 26,568 sq. ft. library (1 space per 400 sq. ft of building), plus a minimum of 9 spots for staff and handicap for a total of 75 parking spots. The proposed parking lot has 21 spots (only 28% of the spots required).
- b. Additional on-street parking for 10 spots may be available (4 on Main Street and 6 on Church Street) bringing the total parking to 31. On-street parking is not dedicated parking (and still only 41% of the spots required).
- c. How will this on-street parking affect our existing downtown businesses? There is already a shortage of parking spots, and several on-street spots have already been lost in front of The Gourmet and Bill's Pizza.
- d. Has there been a traffic study to determine the effect on Main and Church Streets? Would Church Street need to become one-way to accommodate on-street parking?
- e. The Center School site design had over 90 parking spots.

4. Residential neighborhood in Historic District

- a. The existing library is in the Historic District.
- b. The library will be seen from Main Street, Hayden Rowe and the town common.
- c. The library needs an easement from one of the abutters for the parking lot buffer.
- d. Is the current design in keeping with the historic character of the existing structures and the historic district?
- e. The architect rendering of the proposed library expansion omitted three residential abutters in the Historic District. This is unprofessional and misleading.
- f. The lots are zoned Residential A where a library is a permitted use. It is clear that the request to change the zoning to Downtown Business District is intended solely to make it easier to get relief from the zoning laws (maximum lot coverage of 35% vs. 60%, and setbacks). The library should not get preferential treatment at the expense of the due process rights of abutting private property owners.

5. Grant Requirements

- a. Once we accept state money for construction, we are bound to certain requirements of the MBLC.
 - i. What are the requirements regarding hours of operation? We have limited the hours in the past due to budget constraints.
 - ii. What are the staffing requirements for a library of that size?
 - iii. How will these grant requirements affect the operating budget?

6. Books

- a. How much area is planned for books? New vs. existing?
- b. E books are becoming more popular and the demand for printed books is decreasing.
- c. Accessing books from other libraries has been very effective for Hopkinton citizens. Hopkinton borrowed 10,000 books in 2010 from other libraries via its interlibrary loan network.
- d. Library patrons can order books from home from any library in the network and pick them up at the Hopkinton branch.
- e. The libraries in the public schools already provide additional resources for the students in town.

7. Community Input

- a. How many people attended the meetings/forums that are being used as a basis for the community input for this expansion project?
- b. In the letter from Elaine Lazuras she states that “There have been many opportunities for public officials and Town staff to participate in the process and provide feedback,...”. How much feedback has been collected from the general community?

8. What is the real cost of the library expansion project?
- a. The cost estimate for the project is \$10,231,000. According to MBLC 605 CMR the state could contribute up to +/- \$4,520,000 of the cost. The town and the library will each need to contribute +/- \$2,800,000. How much of the \$2,800,000 in private contributions has the library raised? If they fall short, the town will be asked to make up the difference.
 - b. Has the library certified to the town's satisfaction that they have raised their 25% of required funding before requesting the town to appropriate funds? (Parks & Recreation needed to secure private funding before the town would appropriate funds for fields.)
 - c. It is our understanding that the library's McGovern trust fund is for books only, and can not be used for the building expansion.
 - d. Will the town have to assume any debt for the property at 9 Church Street?
 - e. What will be the annual operating cost? The information on the library website indicates that we are currently spending approximately \$350,000 (0.6% of municipal budget) per year, when we should be spending 1.3 – 1.6% of the budget on the library. Where will the town come up with the additional \$400,00 – \$600,000 in annual operating costs?