

Donna Conkling

From: Mayor
Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2016 5:56 PM
To: Donna Conkling
Cc: Steve Pappalardo; Robert Cole; David Lee (dlee.trustee@gmail.com); Bill Stern; dpekarek@verizon.net; Marc Samwick (marc.samwick@verizon.net); Carl Finger; Matt Callaghan
Subject: Fw: Library Renovation Plan

FYI. JM

From: Mayor
Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2016 5:55 PM
To: Barbara Josselsohn
Subject: Re: Library Renovation Plan

Dear Ms. Josselsohn -- Thank you for your email.

Very truly yours, Jon Mark

From: Barbara Josselsohn <barbara.josselsohn@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2016 5:39 PM
To: Mayor
Subject: Library Renovation Plan

Dear Mayor Mark:

Not too long ago, I was in the main room of the library doing some work, when a pretty heated disagreement broke out. A woman who'd been reading at a table confronted a young man who'd been advising (in a reasonably low voice) a young woman on her college course selection. The older woman yelled at them for being inconsiderate and disruptive, and then stormed angrily out of the building, leaving the two young people looking utterly confused. "But you're allowed to talk in this room," the young man said. "I know you're allowed to talk in this room."

I thought a lot about that conversation in the following days. Who was right? And then it hit me: They were both right! You should be able to read in silence at the library if you so choose, and you should be able to conduct a meaningful discussion. Neither side was wrong; it's the space that was wrong.

And that's just one of the reasons why I am in favor of the proposed library renovation. As a 21-year resident of Scarsdale, an active community volunteer, and a past president of the Scarsdale Library Board of Trustees, I believe it's essential that we move forward with this project.

To be clear, I love our current library as much as anyone can. I love the building. I love the facade. I love the grounds. I think it's great that to some people, the library is perfect as is. But I know that to many people, the library is far from perfect. Specifically, the library is not perfect if you are:

— a person who uses a wheelchair and can't make it through the library's narrow hallways to get to a restroom;

— a person with physical limitations who cannot walk up the stairs to get to the fiction collection on the mezzanine, and is embarrassed to have to ask for the key-access lift;

— a stay-at-home parent looking for engaging community programming for a baby or toddler;

— a “green” advocate who abhors the library’s antiquated and energy-wasteful infrastructure;

— a learner of any age who wants silence in order to study or do work;

— a student, PTA committee member, local professional, or learner of any age who wants a neutral, welcoming place to brainstorm with others without fear of enduring the wrath of someone looking for silence;

— a student who walked over from the high school and would like to enjoy a healthy snack, rather than eating an over-processed granola bar or soggy, warm sandwich that has sat in a backpack all day;

— anyone who would like to enjoy a fresh, healthy snack without having to get back in the car (or call a taxi) to find one.

A public library needs to meet the needs of all.

The fact is, libraries are the cultural, educational, and civic centerpiece of a community. They reflect the best of a community’s values. It’s a testament to the importance of libraries that many local communities, such as Port Chester, Mamaroneck, and others, have invested in major library renovations in recent years.

It surprises me that some have claimed that a major and long overdue library renovation will spoil our children. I would strongly counter that a major and long overdue renovation to our library will elevate our children, by teaching them that we value community, inclusiveness, and lifelong learning.

The proposed library renovation is a reasonable, well-thought-out plan that addresses weaknesses and fixes serious problems while maintaining all of the building’s beauty and enhancing its ability to serve the public in a meaningful way. I hope our community will embrace it.

Sincerely,

Barbara Solomon Josselson

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