

March 5, 2016

Letter to the Editor, Scarsdale Inquirer

We are writing in opposition to the proposed library renovation project. We are long time residents of the village and have been weekly visitors to the library for the entire time we have lived here. We love the library but we are very concerned about the scope and cost of this project and we do not share this vision of the library.

There is a big difference between 'wants' and 'needs' and we feel that difference has been missed here. We strongly believe that a project of this magnitude and cost should be submitted to a referendum to determine if the taxpaying members of this village are committed to this project.

We reviewed the Library Facts for Scarsdale Residents handout and were quite surprised to see this renovation for our Village (with relatively little commercial tax revenue) of 18,000 residents being considered in the same light as renovations to libraries in Greenburgh (population 88,000) and Ossining (population 37,000).

We are already a highly taxed community and while an additional average cost of \$168 per year for 15 years may not appear to be much, it is when one considers that the town share of our property taxes are reported to be increasing by an average of over \$300 next year.

We have finite resources and if we expend our resources on the library we will not be able to fulfill other needs. As an example, we note the deplorable condition of Village roads. We are concerned that incurring a debt of this size to renovate the library will impact our ability to obtain funding for the extensive road repair that is becoming increasingly necessary.

We understand and support the need to pay for deferred capital maintenance. We do not wish to see our infrastructure decay. However, is an emergency generator really part of capital maintenance? Will the library be used as an emergency shelter? If not, then an emergency generator is an expensive unnecessary expense. It is certainly not a 'need'. It would not be wise to have people congregate in the library in an emergency where aside from the generator there would not be resources available. Also, in an emergency library staff must be available to operate the generator and the library. We truly think it unwise to call out librarians in a storm to operate a generator and staff the library.

Other proposed capital costs are not well thought out. The café proposal only makes sense if there is a level of rental income adequate to justify the construction cost of the space. Is it realistic to expect a tenant to rent this space in a library with limited hours of use? Does the Village want to become a landlord to Starbucks?

We visit the library frequently, usually on weekends. We have never noticed overcrowding. We do not see the need for enlarging the existing library footprint. We are also extremely disturbed at the proposed closing of the library for at least two years while construction is taking place. A trailer in a field will not meet our needs.

We are senior citizens. As with most residents, we have access to adequate internet services and do not require the library to provide such services. We are also at an age and stage in life where tax increases concern us. Increases in our taxes for projects like this will only encourage us to leave the Village.

The private funding should be in place BEFORE the public commitment of funds. It has been challenging to achieve significant private funding for other ventures such as the ambulance service and the indoor sports center projects. Nevertheless, at over \$12 million of public funding this project is too expensive and not necessary.

We encourage the Village to fund the deferred maintenance library needs (with the exception of the generator since that is not a maintenance item and not a 'need'). The deferred maintenance costs were quoted at about \$5 million dollars. We feel that anything beyond that is a 'want'. The 'wants' should be funded privately, or publicly only with approval by referendum of the taxpaying residents of the village.

Sincerely,

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