

From: Harvey Barten <harveybarten@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2016 2:17 PM
To: Mayor
Subject: Proposed library renovation

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Harvey Barten <harveybarten@gmail.com>
Date: November 30, 2016

To the Mayor and Village Trustees:

Last night, My wife and I attended the Village Board meeting dedicated to the proposed library changes. The presentation was much the same as what we had heard in two previous discussion groups that the library Board had organized. They are surely to be commended for their thoughtfulness, dedication and hard work. What was offered last night was extraordinarily well done. Supporters of the proposal were out in force, proudly wearing their library insignia. Some spoke most eloquently about the value of a first-rate library, and particularly about the need for expanded children's services. On these matters we whole-heartedly agree.

We have lived in Scarsdale for almost 50 years. We and our children and visiting grandchildren have been the beneficiaries of our marvelous library. It is the community resource we most value. I go there at least once a week. Apart from the need for more space for children's programs, however, I share the concerns verbalized last night by some speakers, which I know trouble many members of the community who were not in attendance.

1. There are alternatives to adding new meeting spaces, such as an expanding divider in the Scott room that could provide separate areas for the many meetings that can be held in a smaller space. When we questioned Library Board members and the director, Ms. Bermel, about where meetings would be held during the two years that the library would be relocated while under construction, we were told that other spaces are available in the community. This of course could legitimize questions that have been raised about the need for adding more meeting spaces in

the library.

2. Reconstruction of this magnitude does carry risks, only some of which have been addressed. Many bear further examination. The site has some inherent construction problems. The reconfigured exterior may sacrifice the lovely aesthetic qualities of the present structure. Cost overruns are not to be underestimated. The need for added parking space has not been fully resolved. Additional staffing expenses are quite possible, though this is not anticipated by Ms. Bermel.

3. The Library Board is committed to a redesign package with a rationale that is not shared by many community members. No alternative has been offered for the completed architectural design that we are told would be at this stage extremely difficult and time-consuming to modify. It is unequivocally stated that the second floor stacks are unacceptably hard to access, and that the present elevator, which can carry three people, is unsatisfactory. Alternatives to the costly elimination of those stacks, such as a new elevator, do not appear to have been seriously considered.

4. Temporary relocation of the library, for two years, possibly longer, is a huge, costly, and problematic undertaking. Ms. Bermel conceded, in one of our earlier meetings, that library services will be severely curtailed, a large number of the books in the collection will be unavailable, and other services will be compromised. If savings are realized because of reduced staffing needs, how many staff members are to be laid off for those two years? Could this relocation be avoided? If some components of the proposed redesign were to be eliminated, such as the costly stack modifications, added meeting spaces, and the creation of rooms for private study. One infinitely simpler alternative to relocation would be to shut down the library during a summer, when student need is minimal, and many residents are on vacation, so that the most disruptive components of the reconstruction could be completed.

The Library Board's efforts, albeit exemplary, have not sufficiently addressed these issues, or some of the financial questions raised last night. I know of no-one who would disagree that our library should be one of Scarsdale's highest priorities, but there is still room for respectful discussion about what will best serve our needs, and at what cost.

Harvey H. Barten M.D.
12 Overhill Rd.

