

Voter Information Bulletin

Town of Douglas

February 2005

Special Town Meeting
Monday, February 7, 2005 at 7:00 PM
Douglas High School Auditorium

Message from Finance Committee:

The Finance Committee met and heard comments from members of the Library Building Committee on January 10 and January 24 before voting on Article 1. The Chairman, Merritt Tetreault, and various Building Committee members described updated information and expressed their hopes that the Finance Committee would give a positive recommendation to the upcoming Special Town Meeting on February 7. We also listened to a comparative report by Finance Committee member Gary Bolen relating to similar-sized libraries in small communities. This report, based upon State reporting, outlined comparisons in the use of various components of Library services and revealed differences in management and governance style.

The majority of members present did not support a positive recommendation to Town Meeting. As voted previously in October, the vote was split with 3 voting against, 2 voting for and under existing rules that the Chairman not vote except to break a tie. Attendance was as follows:

9 members total - 2 members absent, 1 position unfilled = 6 members present.

Changes that have occurred since October should be mentioned here. The cost for the project is now estimated to add \$0.33/\$1000 to the tax rate; this equates to \$83/year on a house valued at \$250,000. The recent revaluation resulted in a broader tax base and reduces the impact to Douglas taxpayers. It has also been determined that the School Project debt has now been fully realized in the tax rate. Costs for operating this facility have been estimated to be approximately \$ 200,000 in the first year. The proposed addition will add 12,000 square feet to the 4,000 square foot existing facility; this new 16,000 sq. ft. facility is the recommended/mandated size by the granting authority for a \$1.8 million dollar grant approval.

If Town Meeting approves this project, the cost cannot be funded inside of our Proposition 2 ½ limit and must be voted as a Debt Exclusion in the form of a ballot vote. This vote is to be scheduled before the deadline approval date of May 2005 in order to receive the above mentioned State Grant.

Ultimately, the taxpayers and citizens of Douglas will vote and decide.

1. Library Construction Project

2. Adoption of Revised FY06 – 11 Capital Improvement Plan

Article 1. Library Construction Project:

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$3,500,000 to pay costs of constructing an addition to the Simon Fairfield Public Library, and also to pay costs of remodeling, reconstructing, making extraordinary repairs, and to furnish and equip the Simon Fairfield Public Library; including the payment of all other costs incidental and related thereto, and to determine whether this appropriation should be raised by taxation, by transfer from available funds, by borrowing or otherwise, provided, however, that no amounts shall be borrowed or expended hereunder, except for such amounts as are necessary to pay for the costs of designing the improvements described herein, unless and until the Town shall have voted to exclude the amounts required to repay any bonds or notes authorized hereunder from the limitations imposed by Chapter 59, § 21C of the General Laws (Proposition 2 ½); or to take any other action relative thereto.

Finance Committee: Not recommend

The article includes all costs that the Building Committee has determined will be necessary to complete the projects at the existing Library. With the addition of the available \$1,800,000 Grant, the project totals \$5,300,000.

The rationales for negative votes are costs to the taxpayers, timing of the project and excessive size. (see above message)

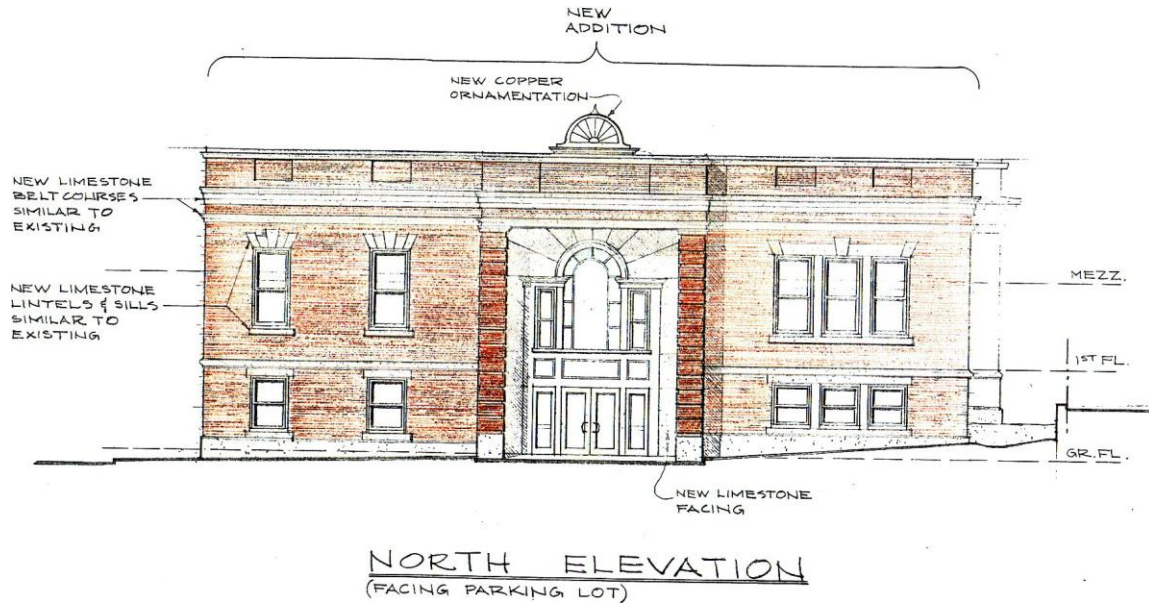
Article 2. Adoption of Revised FY 06 – 11 Capital Improvement Plan:

To see if the Town will vote to approve the Town of Douglas FY06 – 11 Capital Improvement Plan as submitted by the Capital Improvement Committee, or take any other action related thereto.

Finance Committee: Recommend passover

Normally, the Capital Committee presents a 5-year compilation of prioritized yearly projects for Town Meeting approval. The Capital Committee has not submitted the prioritized projects.

New Rear Main Entrance Simon Fairfield Public Library



Components of New Library Proposal

- Additional Parking
- ADA accessible
- Additional space for books
- Quiet study areas
- High speed computers and internet access
- Creation of a children's area
- Rooms for meeting and tutoring
- 90 Seat Community Room
- Local History / Genealogy Room

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has awarded the Town a \$1.8 million grant to renovate and expand the current library.

The library currently has:

- 4270 square feet to support a population of approximately 8000.
- No access for the handicapped. The children's collection, meeting space and book storage areas do not currently comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- No off street parking.
- Two Internet computers.
- No quiet study or reading areas.
- One meeting room which has become an extension of the Children's Library used for story hours.
- Many Massachusetts Building Code violations and safety hazards, including lack of air-conditioning, poor lighting, inadequate wiring, lack of storage space, no elevator, and inaccessible public toilets.

A State Grant of \$1,778,970 (based on a \$5,300,000 building) is available to the community *if* the matching funds are appropriated before May 15, 2005. The renovation will include the following:

- 16,747 square foot facility (this is the minimum size required for our Grant).
- Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and improved access for all.
- Fourteen parking spaces, multiple public Internet computers, a 90 seat community meeting room, quiet reading space and study areas.
- Efficient design that integrates the old building with modern technology with reliable mechanical, electrical and safety systems, all built to current codes and standards for ongoing economical operations.

The State Board of Library Commissioners has notified the Town that a smaller addition would not qualify the library for the State Grant. The estimated cost for bringing the building up to code is approximately \$1,000,000. If this work were to be done outside of this project it would not qualify for a state Grant.

The first library was established shortly after the Town Common and Town Meeting Hall were done. The current building was erected in 1903. Electricity was added in 1905, town water added in 1912. With the exception of maintenance items (roof, paint, carpet, etc.) and concrete floor poured in the basement, the renovation of the story hour room by the Carrick foundation in the 1970s, the library has not been improved upon in its 102 years.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why not combine school and public libraries?

- School Library Media Centers support school curricula whereas public libraries address the voluntary reading and learning needs for people of all ages.
- School facilities require strict security. Public libraries are open to all.
- School libraries appeal to children and may not include the interests of a diverse public.
- An increased car volume, in addition to daily bus schedules, may result in parking and traffic congestion, as well as potential pedestrian safety concerns.
- Public libraries are required to be open some nights and have weekend hours.

HELP WANTED

THE FINANCE COMMITTEE IS ACTIVELY SEEKING NEW MEMBERS TO AUGMENT CURRENT MEMBERSHIP. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, PLEASE CALL CHAIRMAN PAMELA HOLMES (508-476-2564) FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THIS COMMITTEE'S ROLE IN DOUGLAS TOWN GOVERNMENT. YOU WILL BE REFERRED TO THE APPOINTING AUTHORITY, THE TOWN MODERATOR, FOR CONSIDERATION.



Town of Douglas
29 Depot Street
Douglas, MA 01516

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