

Skaneateles Library Continues to Evaluate Options June 2019 Update

Message from the Skaneateles Library Board President

SKANEATELES, NY (June 28, 2019) – In an effort to better meet the community's current and future library service needs, the Skaneateles Library Board of Trustees is continuing to evaluate which is the best path forward for the library: renovate and expand at our current location or select another site for a new library building.

The work needed to prepare us for the future has been deliberate and extensive, and we appreciate the community's input and support as the Library Board continues to do our diligence as the body charged with meeting the mission and vision of this great institution:

- *To inspire learning, enrich lives and connect our community*
- *To be the cultural and informational hub of a vibrant, thriving community by creating spaces and experiences that are welcoming, enriching and sustainable*

There has been a dramatic transformation in libraries over the past 20 years brought about by changes in how we work, learn and interact with our world. Today's libraries still do what they have always done – provide books and other materials for us to share. But now we also expect our libraries to provide opportunities to learn and socialize, places to work and study alone or in groups, and spaces to host meetings and events. As more and more tasks must be done online – from schoolwork to applying for jobs to accessing government resources – libraries have become the infrastructure that provides equal and open access to the technologies we need and the people who can help us learn to use them.

The Library Board has determined that our building in its current state falls short of the space needed to adequately serve the shifting needs of our community. Because of extremely limited parking and drop off areas, limited space for learning and working, and lack of compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, many members of the community find our library's programs and services inaccessible. Roughly 72% of school district residents – the people who pay the tax levy that the library depends upon – live outside the village of Skaneateles, and there are areas of our community where broadband access is unavailable or inadequate.

All of our residents should have access to computers for homework, research and communication. They should be able to attend story times, community movies and lectures, musical performances, book groups and workshops. The Library Board recognizes our responsibility to serve all the taxpayers who support our library. More space, therefore, is essential.

Our library was dedicated – in 1890 – as a state-of-the-art facility. Limited changes over the many decades since have made the current building inadequate for the demands of 2019 and beyond. The most significant improvement in all that time was the addition of 375 square feet of space when the Sphinx was annexed for the children's room more than 30 years ago. Our building has not kept pace with our community's needs, even as we have expanded our services and collections to maximize every square foot of available space, and our usage has continued to grow.

We now have two options to preserve this vital community resource: either renovate the existing building or build a new library. Doing nothing is not perceived as a viable option by our Board. The library needs flexible space designed to provide 21st-century services that can efficiently respond to changing technologies and user needs – not just for now, but for the next generation as well. The Board will decide by the year's end whether we can best serve our community at the library's current location or at another site.

Award-winning library architects Paul Mays and Lisa Hayes are working with us to develop new designs for the current site. They have decades of expertise in libraries, including both new construction and renovation of historic buildings. At the same time, the Library Board's Site Committee, made up of select board members and library staff, has evaluated nearly 20 possible sites for a new library. These sites have been narrowed down to two or three options, including the current site.

Criteria used for evaluating potential spaces includes accessibility, efficiency, aesthetics and cost (a more detailed list of criteria is available on the library's website). A community space is best developed with community input, such as the valuable input received in 2016 and 2017. We also continue to welcome suggestions for additional sites. Community members can submit their ideas by sending an email to feedback@skanlibrary.org.

If the Library Board decides to renovate the existing building, the library will most likely have to relocate and limit its operations for a period of time during construction. The renovation would utilize the total available footprint on the current site. If the Board decides to build a new library, the question of what becomes of the current building will be on our minds. The Board is exploring options to retain ownership of the current building and re-purpose it to further support the community. There are many ways this venerable and classic building can continue to serve our community; your Library Board is exploring a number of these as we deliberate on the implications of our decisions.

The Skaneateles Library's Board of Trustees exists to ensure sound ethical and legal governance and financial management of the library. To learn more about the Board of Trustees and the programs and services available at Skaneateles Library visit SkanLibrary.org.

I am very confident that the Skaneateles Library Board will ultimately make the best decision for our community and future generations of learners. My goal in sharing this status update is to assure you that the Skaneateles Library Board is both deliberate and thoughtful regarding the pending decision.

About Skaneateles Library: The Skaneateles Library Association's origins date to the early 1800s, when library collections were housed in different businesses throughout the village. As part of its mission to inspire learning, enrich lives and connect the community, the library provides access to a world of information in the form of books (print, audio and electronic), DVDs, music, magazines, newspapers, databases and the Internet (including Wi-Fi). The library also offers a wide variety of educational and entertaining programs for kids, teens and adults throughout the year. The Skaneateles Library is a member of the Onondaga County Public Library System. For more information visit SkanLibrary.org.

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