

September 8, 2020

To the Editor:

As many of your readers know, the Skaneateles Library Board of Trustees decided on December 10, 2019 to embark on a bold vision for the future of the library: retain the existing library building and repurpose it for community benefit and build a new library.

While we've had to take some necessary pauses throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Skaneateles Library trustees have been hard at work planning for this bold enterprise. This new reality we're living in has caused us to reprioritize our known needs and identify new ones. Most of all, it further underscores the need for flexible spaces. The result will be a library better designed to meet the needs of the community now and for the future.

Our next steps are to select a site for the new library, raise the necessary funds and design a building that adds to the beauty of Skaneateles. I am pleased to report that it's "all hands on deck" today as we plan for this undertaking.

At the same time, the library has been and will continue to work very hard to provide new and existing services and programs in this time of uncertainty and need. This includes: expanding digital offerings; boosting our wifi signal; virtual offerings of popular programs, clubs and lectures; and more kits and hardware to use at home.

Our digital collection has been available 24/7 throughout the shutdown, and we've provided access to our physical collection since mid-June via Curbside Pickup. We recently opened the building for Express Visits by appointment to browse the shelves and use our computers. Tech help is available over the phone, via email or Zoom, and we're working on ways to safely bring that much-needed service back in person.

The role of libraries is evolving:

- Our librarians help us figure out the complexities of life, from exploring job opportunities, navigating and accessing computers and digital devices and so much more.
- Our library strengthens our community. My granddaughters and family have enjoyed story time, made new friends and networked with other parents, forming new personal relationships in a safe place for fun, learning and community-building.
- We feel safe in libraries. They are neutral places designed to serve the public's needs, while offering experiences difficult to replicate elsewhere.

- Libraries have been deemed as increasingly necessary “equalizers” in our society because everyone can use their services, programs, spaces, technology and resources.

Our mission for the new Skaneateles Library is to truly be the hub of our community by providing safe, flexible, accessible space for everyone. With a modern ventilation system and easily transformable space, we will be ready for the next pandemic with a library that can readily adapt and stand the test of time.

As we embark on this mission with our dedicated board of trustees, we will work with you to design a library that all of the residents of our community will be proud to call their own.

We will find new life for the current library building, developing a plan that will make it cost neutral and an integral part of our downtown for the next 100 years. You can find more information about the library’s plans here: <https://www.skanlibrary.org/about/exploring-the-librarys-future>

We have received a great deal of community support for this endeavor, and we are more confident than ever that we are on the right course to improve the quality of life in our beautiful community.

Dave Hempson
President
Skaneateles Library Board of Trustees