

## Heath Free Public Library-Looking to the future

As you know, the Heath Library Trustees with the help of both Lyra Johnson and Don Purington have been working for years trying to make the most of the space in our little library. After trying twice to build or buy another space, we were resigned to making the current library work. Several years ago, Don created a plan to rearrange and upgrade the space to make better use of it. Although the plan addressed some immediate needs of the library, it did not speak to the future. In other words, it was a status quo approach. It also didn't address some of issues in Sawyer Hall that have come to light more recently such as accessibility, social distancing and air quality.

Other than to begin weeding the collection, we have not acted on the plan because of the uncertainty of what was to become of the former Heath School building and whether or not we would be moved over there.

With things still unsettled the trustees thought it would be helpful to do some research and visioning about what the library could offer the community of Heath now and in the future to share with you. As chair of the Trustees, I also attended a State sponsored workshop on space planning for the future and was happy to see that many of our ideas and concerns were in line with what the State recommended.

It is important to note that libraries throughout the US are changing due to the advent of the internet. These changes overall take into consideration other educational and service needs of a community beyond just books. In imagining our library for the next twenty years or so, but even more importantly in thinking about the needs of all of Heath's citizens now, we see new possibilities in what we could offer to our community had we the space to do so.

As you work on how to best utilize the buildings in town, we ask that you consider the library of the future rather than just the status quo and are looking forward to discussing possibilities with you. Below is the list of the ideas we have generated in our planning for the future.

### Heath Library, Planning for the future

*"I see the library as a place to learn the joy of reading, of learning, and of community"*  
Emily Cross, Library Trustee

### Resources that would tend to the needs of all individuals:

- A collection of or access to current resources- books, DVD's, books on tape, etc.
- Access to information with professional guidance as needed.
- Access to technology/tools
- Access to a broader range of resources such as checking out outdoor equipment, tools etc.
- A place to learn new skills and learning through workshops and community networking.
- A place to just sit and have a cup of coffee and read the paper, or do a puzzle

## Resources that would tend to the needs of our community:

- A place that provides for and considers the needs and desires of all people
- Informal and formal spaces to gather with friends and get to know new folks,
- Community educational programs such as workshops on current issues, science or history nights, craft or cooking classes.
- Community recreational programs such as movie nights, potluck dinners, game nights outdoor activities, nature walks.
- Community cultural programs such as art shows, plays, book groups.
- Opportunity for inter and intra connections such as shared programs and resources with other town libraries and teaming with other town committees like the parks committee, the senior center, or the historical society.

## Space that would meet both community and individual needs:

- Fully accessible
- Space for library materials, books DVD's, books on tape
- A spacious area, with room to move around in.
- Places for a variety of activities, play spaces for children, quiet reading places, places for visiting and collaborating.
- Space for community events
- Accessible Resources- connection to technology, printers, new materials
- Comfortable well-lit seating
- Storage for equipment to be used for community events and for materials to loan outside of the regular collection such as outdoor equipment, and art supplies for story hour, or other library needs.
- Outside program space for play or other informal and formal gathering.
- Staff work space

## State recommendations of critical things to consider in planning for the future.

- Conforming to ADA regulations
- Energy efficiency
- Flexible spaces with movable furniture
- Storage and staff spaces
- Plans for a pandemic with
  - Proper ventilation
  - Cleanable furniture
  - Spacing that allows for good traffic flow
  - Enhanced outdoor spaces