



**Town of Amherst
Special Town Council Meeting
Public Forum on Jones Library Appropriations
Monday, April 5, 2021
6:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting
Minutes**

Complete video is available online: <https://youtu.be/15dr4fyTqP8>

1. Call to Order

Councilors Participating Remotely: Bahl-Milne, Brewer, De Angelis, Du Mont, Griesemer, Hanneke, Pam, Ross, Ryan, Schoen, Schreiber, Steinberg, Swartz

Councilors Absent: None

Finance Committee: Robert Hegner, Jane Sheffler, Bernie Kubiak

Others Participating Remotely: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Comptroller Sonia Aldrich, Finance Director Sean Mangano, Chair and Vice Chair of the Amherst Pelham Regional School Committee Allison McDonald & Margaret Stancer, Regional Schools Finance Director Doug Slaughter, Clerk of the Council Athena and Minute Taker Lindsey McConnell

After confirming all participants could hear and be heard, President Griesemer declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. and announced audio and video recording by Amherst Media.

Note: Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, this meeting of the Town Council was conducted via remote participation.

2. Announcements

3. Presentation and Discussion

- a. Jones Library Appropriation Orders: Order Authorizing Community Preservation Act Borrowing Order Authorizing Borrowing to Fund the Expansion and Restoration of the Jones Library – Bond Authorizations

Griesemer stated the hearing is on two orders, one order is for authorizing use of Community Preservation Act funds and the other is authorizing borrowing to fund the renovation and expansion of the library.

Griesemer stated the Council has held four listening sessions, three town council meetings on reports and findings, two public forums on repair or renovation expansion options, the Finance Committee held two committee meetings to discuss question and answers, and there is a sixty page document in packet

regarding the proposed project. Griesemer stated as of this morning the Council has received 268 emails from the public and about 72% support the expansion and renovation while 27% oppose it.

4. General Public Comment

- a. **Public forum on Jones Library Appropriations– Charter Sec. 5.6(c) Residents are welcome to express their views for up to 3 minutes, at the discretion of the Town Council President, based upon the number of people who wish to speak. The Council will not engage in a dialogue or comment on a matter raised during Public Comment.**

Eugene Goffredo, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion, stated it needs to be rebuilt. Goffredo spoke about in-person programming needs, the different way information flows and electronic resources work now, low interest rates, the confluence of State and private money and stated it is imperative the Town move forward.

Todd Holland, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion and stated he served on the Library Sustainability committee and is a professional engineer. Holland stated he is satisfied with the architects including their responses and changes based on feedback as the design evolved. Holland spoke about experience with green buildings and the influence of how a building is used and operated. Holland stated hemming and hawing can result in inaction and inaction is only wrong move to make

Christopher Riddle, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion and stated they are a retired architect. Riddle agreed with Holland's statement and stated he also worked on sustainability committee for this project. Riddle stated it is time to reenergize town infrastructure, and that now is the time to use state money versus say no to it again. Riddle spoke in favor of raising the investment in the beloved library

Judith Souweine, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion, and stated they have lived in area since 70's. Souweine spoke about love the Jones and stated the current space for children is abysmal. Souweine stated plans for children's area look fabulous, there will be more space for tutoring including second languages, the Jones Library is center of the community and jewel of the downtown.

Vincent O'Conner, Amherst resident, spoke against borrowing for the renovation and expansion and against the use of CPA funds. O'Conner stated they have lived in area since 70's, was an initial sponsor for the CPA article and a member of the CPA for six years. O'Conner stated the amount of money being committed to this building in the name of historic preservation is not appropriate given the nature of demolition of various historic features. O'Conner expressed concern about the branch libraries, that there will be sufficient funds in the endowment. O'Conner stated he brought children of color to the children's space and they all found the children's room welcoming and relaxing. O'Conner spoke against the building concept that empowers or directs a primarily white staff to become visual controls of as much space as they can along with other duties. O'Conner urged the Council not to vote for it.

Rebecca Mazur and Craig Cannell, Amherst residents, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Mazur stated the fact that the library does not have an operational teen space is a concern.

Sara Draper, Northampton resident and Hampshire College employee, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Draper stated they have a background in sustainable design and historic

preservation, served on the Jones Sustainability committee. Draper stated this is a wise investment, it will reduce reliance on fossil fuels, lower energy cost, better meet town needs, and also provide an example of historic preservation and sustainable development combination. Draper expressed being please to know so many people in Amherst are focused on climate goals and energy.

Lisa Lieberman, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion, and stated as an author and compulsive reader and parent, they have developed relationships with many librarians and applaud their dedication to readers and the community. Lieberman stated this project will enable them to do their jobs and serve community. Lieberman spoke about experience presenting programs at many different libraries with a mystery writers' organization, and the Jones does not compare well to other libraries or reflect or serve the community.

Adrienne Terrizzi, Amherst resident, didn't mean to speak up at this time.

Carol Gray, Amherst resident, spoke against borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Gray spoke about the top down nature of the process and the need to get pulse of community. Gray stated there are other capital projects and schools need to be rebuilt. Gray stated the Town could take this money to rebuild one of those neighborhood schools now. Gray stated there should have been a town wide survey to find out how people would want to spend the Town's money compared to other capital projects and suggest many would not rate this high. Gray also stated the figures given for the repair option seem false and were calculated by people who want the expansions and not by an objective group. Gray stated some people who can't afford higher taxes, this may risk an override for schools, and asked why the Council is prioritizing this over schools when Town spoke loud and clear about the desire for school.

Claudia Pazmany, spoke as an Amherst resident in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Pazmany thanked the Jones Library and staff for the enormous efforts and the Town Council for taking the process in. Pazmany spoke about how library staff kept programs going and pivoted to offer outdoor browsing, homebound delivery, take and make art kits, and more during the pandemic. Pazmany also spoke as the executive direction of Amherst area Chamber in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Pazmany spoke about being on verge of exciting changes for down town and that this as true opportunity.

Johanna Neumann, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Neumann stated the Town can afford all four projects and that the Town made a huge mistake when it turned away state money for schools. Neumann stated it is galling to hear vocal opponents to the school projects now saying the Town needs to do schools instead of this.

Lee Jennings, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Jennings is will help the town meet climate goals and will provide space for teens. Jennings stated there is a way forward to achieve the four projects and it will be great to have one the entire town can enjoy.

Sarah Eisinger, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion, and stated they are a member of CPAC and have background in economic development and is a LEED accredited professional and a mother. Eisinger stated every time her family visits the library they are among only English speakers. Eisinger stated the library represents a town center, is a place for respite, job searches, free resources, and the current library does not fit the town. Eisinger expressed trust in the professionals who have said the Town can afford all four projects and trust in the library leadership who have stewarded this project including lots of opportunity for Town input.

Jean and Tom Lardner, Amherst residents, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. They stated they live down the block from the library and it is time for the library to take advantage of this opportunity.

Erika Zekos, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Zekos acknowledged how hard people have been working on this and stated opting out of state funding leaves the Town with the same bill for an inferior project. Zekos stated the Town Manager says the Town has been saving and paying debts and the Town can afford this. Zekos stated the Jones is beloved but does not serve the changing Town anymore, is not equipped for the 21st century, has a children's room split on many levels, leaks water and air, and wedges staff in spaces that are too small. Zekos stated the 90's addition will be demolished not the historic structure and the Town should remove the part that isn't working and build back better and that true sustainability is also defined by economic and civic wellbeing.

Kristin Worgess, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Worgess spoke as a parent and school employee and begged the Council to support this. Worgess stated Town is losing young families who are willing to pay high taxes because infrastructure is run down and it isn't a welcoming a place. Worgess stated their children are excited about the net zero aspect, and they are hopeful for this and the other capital projects.

Lydia Vernon-Jones, Amherst resident, spoke against borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Vernon-Jones expressed dismay the Council is talking about major capital projects that does not include retrofitting and renovation of buildings the Town already owns. Vernon-Jones stated it is premature to vote for this before receiving the report from Energy and Climate Action committee.

Marah Loft, Amherst resident, spoke about the complexity of this situation. Loft stated the Jones library one of her favorite things about Amherst, the staff and services are great, and the library needs expansion. Loft expressed dismay at the cost, stated they do not like the plans, the front doesn't look friendly, and the statistics citing who the library serves should not include the college students that have their own libraries. Loft spoke positively about the sustainable aspects of the project. Loft spoke as a long time tutor and stated they never had any problem meeting at library. Loft stated the opinion the project is too big, it is being pushed from top down and expressed the desire use state funds in more thoughtful way.

Laura Draucker, Amherst resident and chair of Energy and Climate Action Committee, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Draucker spoke about the amount of emissions Massachusetts accounts for and the large amount of natural gas the Jones uses. Draucker spoke in favor of the better plumbing and temperature control the new project will have and how it will better serve the community. Draucker stated the Town has been talking about this for over six years so the process is not moving too quickly. Draucker spoke about the consideration going in to climate impact of new materials and about how design adjustments and operational savings to use daylight could improve it even more. Draucker stated the Town should not let perfect be enemy of good.

Jeff Lee, Amherst resident, spoke against borrowing for the renovation and expansion and stated being troubled by the unprecedented move by Library Trustees to hire a marketing firm to support these efforts. Lee stated this appears undemocratic and unfair to citizens who have objections.

David Lithgow, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion. Lithgow expressed being deeply profoundly grateful to those in 1928 who built library in first place. Lithgow stated they have lived here since 70's and raised children in Amherst. Lithgow thanked the people who have worked on this on behalf of people fifty years from now.

Carol Gray spoke again and stated if the Town is prioritizing climate change, the North Amherst Library is on oil, which is worse than gas, and could be put on geothermal. Gray expressed doubt the Town can afford this because an override is being done. Gray stated there should be a polling of the town and there

could be two school projects started immediately. Gray stated people who voted against a mega school because they wanted 2 smaller neighborhood school.

Emery Berger, Amherst resident, spoke in support of borrowing for the renovation and expansion, stated they have lived here over 25 years, are a parent of children that grew up here and are impressed by thoughtfulness and care in proposal.

5. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

6. Adjourn

President Griesemer declared the meeting of the Town Council adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsey McConnell

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

00. 04-05-2021 Special Town Council Agenda - Public Forum on Library Appropriations

8.b. CO FY22 - 08A CPA - Borrowing Auth- Jones Special Collections Facility

8.b. FY21 - 06C JONES LIBRARY EXPANSION AND RESTORATION - BORROWING
AUTHORIZATIONS

8.b. Jones Library Trustees Financial Information regarding expansion project, presentation, and video

8.b. Library Q and A For Town Council 3-31-21 Final

8.b. Memo on Town Council Actions on Jones Library - Town Manager Memo - 03-25-2021

8.b. Town Library MOU 4-1-2021 Approved by Town Attorney

2021-04-05 Finance Committee report to Town Council