

Appendix A.

John Jermain Library Board Invitation to Community Groups

Dear Community Leader:

For the past three years our Library Board of Trustees has struggled with the need for more space in our historic library building. As you well know, our recent proposal was met with considerable community resistance and was defeated in a public vote last fall.

We recognize that much of the concern voiced by our friends and neighbors was founded on a genuine desire to maintain the distinctive character of the Library and of the community. To many residents the Library building is a unique and important local landmark, one that must be honored and cherished as a part of our heritage. But the fact is that the present Library facility simply does not meet the Minimum Standards for Public Library Service required by the New York State Education Department.

To many others, ourselves included, the Library is more than just a landmark, it is a vibrant and responsive educational institution created by our predecessors to serve the entire Sag Harbor community in their lifelong educational pursuits and to prepare our next generation to be productive American citizens. And therein lies our challenge.

It is obvious to the Library Board of Trustees that we will be unable to move ahead successfully with any renovation or expansion effort unless we more fully engage the community in the information gathering and decision making process. We must also recognize that the Library serves a number of distinct communities including Bay Point, North Haven, Noyac and Mount Misery as well as Sag Harbor.

We believe that we have taken an important first step by amending our By-Laws to allow for the public election of Library Trustees, beginning this fall. Truly this is the most significant action we could take to give the community "ownership" of the Library and its future. But that is just a beginning. We are still faced with the challenge of meeting the expectations of our patrons for modern, high quality public library services in a century old facility.

To address this issue in a meaningful fashion the John Jermain Memorial Library Board of Trustees has decided to create a Community Library Committee to seek the advice and insight of a cross section of our community residents. To this end we are requesting a number of community organizations to appoint a representative to participate in this open and thoughtful process. We hope that you, or a member of your organization would join in this community-based effort.

The structure of the Committee is to be as broad as possible, drawing on the judgment and wisdom of as many responsible citizens as possible. Members of the press and elected leaders will be asked to serve in an ex-officio capacity. To complete the Committee, several "at-large" members will be selected to assure fair representation for all the residents served by our Library. The Committee will be chaired by a local resident, not a member of our Board.

The task of the Committee is to:

Evaluate the existing facility needs of the John Jermain Memorial Library in light of its community based service program; investigate all reasonable expansion possibilities and recommend to the Board of Trustees an appropriate plan of action."

It is the wish of the Board of Trustees that the Committee will explore all expansion possibilities, including (and especially) concepts previously rejected. To assist in this process we will:

- Allocate resources, both staff time and money for professional fees, to this process.
- Seek the input of community leaders on all sides of the "Library issue" for the Committee. **Please note however, Committee members must agree to work toward addressing the Library's space needs in a reasonable and open-minded manner. The purpose of the Committee is to facilitate positive and appropriate change, not to just maintain the status quo.**
- The Library Board and administration will spend the time necessary to educate Committee members about the Library, its mission, facilities and service program.
- Every effort will be made to conduct all Committee deliberations in an open manner. Ad hoc representation on the Committee by a member of the local press is being sought. Regular reports to the community at large about Committee activities will be made.

It is our wish to begin the process this spring. We anticipate that the effort will take approximately six months, though we are far more concerned with doing it right than doing it quickly. At the end of this process the Board will have a solid, community-based plan for its future, one reflecting all points of view. We will all benefit as well from having a far more informed and knowledgeable group of respected citizens better able to communicate these issues to the residents of Sag Harbor. And finally, you will have even greater community "ownership" of the John Jermain Memorial Library.

We have tentatively scheduled the first meeting of the Community Library Committee for Saturday, May 14th at 10 am in the Library. We trust you will honor this request and join us in planning for the next century of library service to the Sag Harbor community.

Yours truly,

Robert Reiser, President

On behalf of the John Jermain Memorial Library Board of Trustees

Gayle Ratcliffe

Diane Gaites

Donna Milazzo

MaryAnn Whitehead

James Marquardt

Deborah Wilson

Gregory Ferraris

Robert McDade