

## FY27 Budget Update

Dear Library Patron,

The FY27 budget process is currently underway. As you may know from this past fall's public forums for the override ballot question, our community is facing some difficult decisions this budget cycle. The mayor has begun meeting with department heads and will recommend a municipal budget to the City Council in the coming weeks. Now is the time for elected officials to hear from residents about what you value and want prioritized.

Through email and social media updates we've tried to keep you informed about various improvements we've made over the last couple of years here at the library, including:

### **Caring for our Historic Building**

#### *Preservation Projects*

- Applied for and received listing on National Register Listing for Historic Places
- Conserved original front doors to stabilize this priceless feature of our building
- Restored front six windows on main level including new paint in original historic colors

#### *Conditions Assessment and Facilities Master Plan*

- Moved circulation desk to maximize use of the main, accessible, level of the building
- Upgraded to an accessible reference desk to improve services to all patrons
- Upgraded old window AC units with portable units for efficiency
- Improved outdoor programming space and replaced damaged chain link fence

### **Serving our Community**

- Started a monthly visit to Heritage Towers improving access to library materials for residents with limited mobility
- Part of the working group for Amesbury first Juneteenth Celebration
- Established the library as a pickup site for free groceries from Our Neighbor's Table
- Launched our exhibition program and held two exhibitions
- Digitized over 12,000 pages of content for the digital library
- Distributed over 1,500 Storytime Takeout Kits to families

What you may not know is that we have done all this despite losing a total of 53 staff hours per week between 2019 and today. You may have personally felt the impact of this shortage during one of our five staffing shortage closures in 2025. In fact, these closings are putting us dangerously close to losing our certification. We must be certified to be in our library network (Merrimack Valley Library Consortium) which allows Amesbury residents to access resources well beyond the ability of an independent 21<sup>st</sup> century library.

Amesbury's contribution to MVLC will only be \$54,361 in FY27. MVLC estimates that if Amesbury were to need to replace MVLC provided services on its own, it would cost the city \$1,892,507.

The last four years since reopening from the pandemic closures:

Library Usage		Library Resources	
Borrowing	+ 23%	Staffing Hours/Week*	-12%
Internet Sessions	+149%	Hours Open	-0.66%
Attendance at Programs	+94%	Number of Programs	-44%
Patron Visits	+31%	Average number of times close due to lack of staff	3 times/year

\*Calculated change from FY19 to FY26

This data clearly demonstrates that we provide unparalleled service to the community and community demand for our services is high and on an increasing trend. We take a lot of pride in being such a valuable resource to this community.

Recognizing that losing the library's certification is a cost our community cannot bear, the Library Board of Trustees and I jointly recommended a budget for FY27 which is a modest increase of \$78,698 over FY26. This proposed budget would allow us to stabilize operations and ensure we meet the criteria to remain certified.

The requested increase over FY26 would cover the increase in the MVLC fee and slightly increase our staffing hours to relieve the pressure on staff and minimize/eliminate the risk of closure due to staffing shortages. The requested FY27 budget *would* mean cuts in services as it targets funding towards the line items necessary to maintain library certification.

If you want to learn more about anything I've written here or discuss the library's budget with me, my door is always open to you. I will also be holding special office hours in the library's Amesbury Room at the following times:

- **Midday:** Friday, March 20 from 12-1pm
- **Weekend:** Saturday, March 21 from 11:30am-12:30pm
- **Evening:** Tuesday, March 31 from 6:30-7:30pm

Sincerely,

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