

South Burlington Community Library Trustees Current Space Update

It is the vision and goal of the Community Library Trustees to see established a free standing Community Library in the City of South Burlington to better serve the community and make it proud. To this end we are encouraged by the plans of the City of So. Burlington to create a new City Center. It is our understanding that current conceptual plans for the Center incorporate a dedicated space solely for the Community Library, with potential additional space to be shared with other City Departments.

However, the reality is that this proposed City Center is potentially five plus years in the making.

The question therefore arises as to what we can do **from today until that time** to make our current Community Library a better place and one which can best serve our community, of all ages.

The key issue is one of **SPACE**. While what seemed to be a good idea at the time in the 70's, to create a joint High School and Community Library, today we find that the populations that each serve have grown tremendously, along with changes in their needs and ideologies for running a library.

This update addresses the Community Library only. We understand though that as we share this current space with the High School Library their needs too must be taken into consideration.

The reality is that the Community Library, in looking to best serve our community, has simply outgrown the space we rent from the school. The space is no longer adequate. The following are issues related to this space, in no specific order of importance.

- When one views the collection you see shelves bursting at the seams with books piled on the floor and windowsills because of lack of adequate shelf space. There simply is not enough shelf space to house our vibrant library collection and all that it entails.
- Because of a mutually shared space there are some times when the desire of one entity to rearrange are hindered by the other entity's need for space or desire for another idea.
- There are currently moves underway to move the computers, now in the adult reading room out in to the area besides the front desk. This will be achieved by reduction in space currently given to periodicals due to decreased usage.

- With this added space in the reading room it has been suggested moving the large print collection into this space. This should better serve older patrons relative to access.
- While school is in session, probably 60% percent plus of the Community Library hours, there is a lack of space for patrons to sit at either chairs or tables, during their visit, due to use by the students. This also applies to lack of convenient parking in the parking lot. The parking situation is also a hindrance to the public during library programs, especially during children's programs in the morning.
- Meetings space is also an issue as related to the Community Library. Staff, Trustees Board and committees, and Friends of the Library are all limited in where and when they can meet. There is a school district meeting room within the library space, an ideal location for both meetings and small programs presented by library, but it is district controlled space and not always available for library use on a regular basis.
- The Children' Library has a dedicated space within the Community Library. This is a special place and with its own Children's Librarian there are wonderful activities and programs going on throughout the year with great participation. Here again space is an issue during programs as well as the previously mentioned parking.
- Security becomes an increasingly important issue with the shared space. Locks were finally installed on the Children's Library room, but there continue to be offices in the library space without locks. Also, there is an entrance from the library space into the High School. While recent incidents nationwide have drawn attention to security entering schools, there still remains this open public space, the library, adjoining this entryway.
- A real health concern within the library space is that there exists only one bathroom. It is used by students, library staff, and community patrons both young and old. It is not handicapped accessible by today's standards and really not convenient to those using the community library.
- Program space is a **major** issue in the Community Library. A modern library serves not only as a space housing a collection of materials. It has become a space offering programs to the community on a vast array of subjects to patrons of all ages. In South Burlington we do not really have a community gathering space and the library thru its many programs provides this. Our current librarian has developed a extensive range of programs throughout the year and attendance shows their success. Some tend to be smaller with 30 or so attendees but there are many that attract 100 plus. Chairs, tables and shelves oftentimes need to be moved to accommodate these programs and many times even doing this does not afford enough space.
- In addition, libraries of today have also become a resource center for the community, beyond the books. They serve as a location for many in the community without access

to computers. They come to job search, fill out government mandated forms and the like. This is an ever growing need for our patrons, again with only limited space.

- There is also the issue of staff space. We have a truly dedicated staff, who we appreciate, but they have really limited space to operate in relative to their work. This applies to the high school staff as well. While our emphasis is always first and foremost on the library patrons, a good overall working environment is always preferred. There is a limited amount of desk space for the staff, many sharing space, and no real private area for things such as a lunch or break time table or kitchen set up.

The City has offered storage space with the newly reconfigured City Hall building. This is appreciated and will help clear some cluttered areas and also allow offsite storage for some parts of the collection that are not needed on a regular basis.

We are in ongoing discussions with the school relative to additional meaningful space for use by the library. Yes, this is a school and they need to accommodate their students and their needs. However, the decision was made many years ago by both the City and School to incorporate the Community Library within the school space. The reality is that the space originally planned for the library is no longer adequate. When the new library becomes a reality in the future, the school will have a great deal of additional space in which to what they wish with. As we look forward to a new modern designed facility we also look to them having an updated library as well.

In the meantime however we need to be able to work together, the Community Library, the High School and the City. If a new Community Library facility was only a little more than a year away then I suppose all parties could and should deal with the existing situation. It is not though and during these interim years we must find a way to have a Community Library that properly serves all the citizens of So. Burlington and one they can continue to be proud of.