

I don't think this office should assume that just because people did attend the informational meetings that means we are in favor of the library at NQP. What it could mean, as in my case, and in the case of others I spoke with, is we did not want to listen to a presentation we did not support. A lot of people I spoke with were too intimidated to speak out with the committee sitting there & the architect. If this office wants to know what the taxpayers really think, they might consider providing them with that opportunity and hold special meeting to solicit public opinion before this BOS brings this to the BOF.

I have concerns about whether or not an 8,000 square foot, \$7.4 million library (excluding bonding costs), can be sustained by Chester's taxpayers, or utilized enough by Chester's population to warrant a building of this magnitude.

According a report filed by Stephanie Romano in Nov 2016, there are only 1041 library cardholders. Also, Stephanie had to cancel programs because of no attendance such as movie night, and let go of the person she hired to read to the kids because of low attendance.

We want young families to be able to move here and older families to be able stay here, but who can afford it? It's tough enough as it is. And this project it will only make it worse.

So these are my questions.

Has a feasibility study been done on the space where the Essex Savings Bank is after their lease is up? And if not, why not? It's large enough. There's plenty of parking. There's a community room upstairs. It's already built. The town owns it. It's 0.6 miles from the center. Can we revisit expanding the current library since a survey conducted by the Chester Public Library stated residents "resoundingly preferred to stay in the current location."

Perhaps we build a smaller library. The state recommendation is 1.6 square feet per person. With a population of 4,245, does 6,720 square feet or smaller make sense? Certainly, it would cost less to build, staff and maintain. Libraries are also going digital and ultimately will require less space to house collections. There is an increasing decline in library use across the country according to surveys conducted over the past five years by the Pew Research Center. Should all this be considered when deciding on how much square footage is need? We also have 7 neighboring libraries offering programs and events all within a 12-minute drive or less that can easily be utilized.

I think this plan will be huge burden on the taxpayers and these points need to be carefully considered before moving forward.

Caryn Davis