

To: Mayor and Town Council

From: Library Board of Trustees

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Subject: The Library Board's 2005-06 Budget Recommendations

Date: March 23, 2005

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The Library Board thanks the Mayor and Council for an additional opportunity to comment on budget needs for the Chapel Hill Public Library. We do appreciate your support for improvements in Library services for the citizens of Chapel Hill.

The current CHPL planning process was initiated by the Town Council in 1997 with the establishment of a Library Needs Assessment Task Force to identify long term Library service and facilities needs. That led to further studies involving the Library Board, the Council, and citizens, each study aided by professional library consultants. The planning process resulted in three major reports and sets of recommendations:

1. *Five Year Services Plan: 2001-2006 and Long Term Facilities Needs Through 2020* (dated September 30, 2001)
2. *Chapel Hill Public Library Information Technology Plan 2003-2007* (dated January 21, 2003)
3. *Chapel Hill Public Library Recommended Building Program* (dated January 2003)

Together, these reports constitute the *Library Master Plan*, which the Council endorsed in 2003.

The Master Plan identifies problems and recommends service improvements and an associated timeline. These include:

1. **Too few books and other materials.** The *Master Plan* recommends several phases of collection development and expansion to bring the per-capita number of books from 2.5 to a norm of 4. To start in 2001-02.
2. **Unmet demand for children's programs and other children's services.** The *Plan* concludes that the CHPL more generally needs a staff increase of 5.5 FTEs. The first to be hired in 2002-03.

3. **Technology lags accepted and reasonable library standards.** Many different recommendations and some significant progress to date, thanks to funding provided by the Council. A significant recommendation remains, and that is for an automated self check-out/check-in and inventory system. The *Plan* recommends implementation in 2002-03 for this system.
4. **An expanded building.** The studies note that this need was identified first in the late 1980s, when planning began for a bond referendum which unfortunately failed, and they affirm that overcrowding is a major problem. The building that opened in 1994 was too small on opening day.

With the exception of some welcome technology improvements, none of these needed enhancements to Library services has been funded.

Our recommendations tonight are taken from the Council-approved *Master Plan*, and all are improvements identified for earlier implementation. The first three directly affect the 2005-06 operational budget, and they are presented in priority order.

1. More books

The books shortage won't be resolved until we have more space. But as an interim measure, the Library can add to existing space enough new shelving for 9000 more books, about 3500 for children and the remaining for adults. That is a collection increase of about 6%. A 6% collection increase requires a similar increase in the annual book budget to maintain the larger collection, assuming also a similar increase in support from the Friends of the Library.

For the 2005-06 budget year, the Board recommends funding for the shelves, \$11,000; one-quarter of the new book capacity, or 2250 books at a cost of \$56,250; and an increase in the book maintenance budget of \$2,800. That total is \$70,050.

With shelf expansion, the Library moves closer to the grossly overcrowded condition of the old Franklin Street building that some of you may recall. Collection expansion also will result in more pressure on a staff already too few.

2. A children's librarian

Demand for children's services continues to be the fastest area of Library growth. The one children's librarian position is simply not enough, and many children are turned away from programs or cannot benefit from the services of a children's library specialist. A second children's librarian is a top staffing need. The base salary for an entry-level librarian 1 is \$37,383.

### 3. Automated check-in/check-out and inventory system; additional technical position

With the Council's support, the Library has made technical improvements: More public terminals and an enhanced automation system are notable changes. But the Library will soon have 80 PCs and a central automation server, all requiring more skilled support that is not part of the Library's present staff.

The Library intends to acquire an automated self check-out/check-in and inventory system as soon as Library Gift Funds donations can cover the cost, perhaps another year. The system may lead to personnel cost savings through attrition of the present checkout staff, but it will be yet another piece of technology demanding attention from a well-trained technologist. A second need for additional personnel is a full-time technology support person. A library assistant 3 entry-level salary is \$27,895, and that position could perform many of the more routine technical tasks.

### 4. Building too small for present and ever growing demand

This remains the big ticket item. Please convene the already-appointed Library Building Committee, use the \$500, 000 of 2003 Library Bonds already issued by the Council, and finish the building expansion planning/design. Then commit to an opening date in the 2008-09 fiscal year. Only then will the Library have a chance to meet accepted levels of service for our citizens.

The Board acknowledges the difficult budget decisions before the Council, and we are grateful that you accept the responsibility for these decisions. But the Library is way behind making improvements that have been well-studied, are accepted by the Council, and are long overdue. The Board is recommending funding in 2005-06 only for some critical needs. The service shortfall and shrinking space will only get worse, and long and costly expansion planning is aging as we wait for additional funds.

Thanks for your consideration.