

[View this email in your browser](#)



Library Project Update and Urgent Request

Dear Friends,

Thank you to all of our Friends who wrote letters and/or attended the June 10 Zoning Board of Appeals Zoom meeting. In summary, the ZBA did not vote on the library project, the discussion will continue on July 8, and now we need an even greater show of support for that meeting.

THE CRITICAL TOPICS

What the Library Project Needs From the ZBA

For the proposed library to be built at 1 School Street, the ZBA must grant a groundwater protection special permit and zoning relief. More details on each can be found later in this letter.

Legal Expertise Needed

How You Can Help

Please e-mail the ZBA at sharonzba@townofsharon.org requesting they grant the special permit and zoning relief for the project. Spread the word and ask friends, neighbors, and book club members to show their support. It is very likely a ZBA vote will be taken on July 8, so please act now. Emails should be sent by Monday, July 6. If possible, please attend the Zoom meeting on July 8 at 7 p.m. by clicking on this link or

If you are an attorney and would like to donate your legal expertise, please email info@sharonpubliclibraryfoundation.org.

The Friends and the Foundation Thank You
Help clear the way for Sharon to build a Library that will serve the community now and into the future. Please keep reading for more detailed information and write to the ZBA (sharonzba@townofsharon.org) by July 6.

DETAILED INFORMATION

Specifics on What the Library Project Needs from the ZBA:

Special Permit

This special permit is required because the proposed library site is situated in Sharon's groundwater protection district. For reference, half of Sharon is in this district and this lot is at the very edge. To ensure no adverse effects on the groundwater, the septic design and all other requirements to protect groundwater have not only been met but greatly surpassed. For example, the system will handle a once-in-a-century rainstorm.

Without this special permit, the library cannot be located at the site.

Zoning Relief from Regulations: Lot Coverage and Setbacks

The ZBA has the power to grant relief from zoning requirements. Under the Dover Amendment in

copying and pasting it into your browser: <https://zoom.us/j/6619331292?pwd=akFmV1A3RkIXeEhyamIHeG5tRVdzZz09>

Sample letter for the ZBA

Please feel free to personalize this letter. Send it to sharonzba@townofsharon.org.

Dear Zoning Board of Appeals:

At the May 2019 Town Election, the townspeople approved a new library building at 1 School Street. Collectively our town determined this to be the best location at the best cost for our community. The library requires a special permit for groundwater protection and zoning relief for lot size and setbacks, and I hope

Massachusetts General Law (MGL Chapter 40A, Paragraph 3), this relief may be granted without precedence. The Dover Amendment states:

“No zoning ordinance or by-law shall regulate or restrict the interior area of a single family residential building nor shall any such ordinance or by-law prohibit, regulate or restrict the use of land or structures for religious purposes or for educational purposes on land owned or leased by the commonwealth or any of its agencies.”

Attorney Dick Gelerman, Sharon Town Counsel, opined on the Dover Amendment in his April 22, 2020, letter to the ZBA: “A public, municipal library is considered an educational purpose on land owned by a subdivision of the commonwealth.”^[1]

Relief is needed for lot coverage and setbacks:

- **Lot Coverage:** The proposed building's footprint would cover 32% of the lot; 25% coverage is allowed in this residential district. The space needs for a library are not the same as they would be for a residence, and a library should not be held to the same requirements. The proposed library's size was determined through a detailed vetting process with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and is smaller in square footage than new libraries built in

there is no objection from the Zoning Board in allowing this vital Sharon resource to be built. It is my understanding that the proposed building plan far exceeds requirements to protect Sharon's groundwater. Additionally, the lot coverage and setback deviations are minimal.

It is critical that the ZBA understand the impact of their decision on the entire community. If the ZBA does not grant relief from zoning requirements, the town's only options would be expensive and time-consuming, especially if the town loses the \$7.5 million grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. In the worst-case scenarios, the town may either lose its library or be left with a smaller

neighboring towns.

- **Setbacks:** The building would be situated 52 feet from Main Street and 30 feet from School Street, instead of the residential requirement of 70 feet and 50 feet, respectively. The proposed setbacks were chosen in part to locate parking behind the library and also to situate the building further from the abutters' properties.

What Happens If the ZBA Does Not Grant Relief From Zoning Requirements

In each of these scenarios, the town would lose more than \$1 million it has already spent on the project.

1. **Redesign at the proposed School Street site.** This would cost an additional estimated \$1 million for a new design. The result could be a smaller library that does not meet our town's needs now or in the future. This scenario may require a Town Meeting vote
2. **Start all over in another location.** This option is expensive and time-consuming. The town would lose the \$7.5 million state grant, which is expected to cover 45% of the cost of the project, and Sharon may not be eligible for a future grant. It took six years to get the new library project to this stage. The existing library will not be able to stay open without expensive repairs. Additionally, there is currently no land available anywhere else.

library that would not meet its needs. This is unacceptable in a town that values community and education as much as Sharon does.

The library enhances our community's educational resources; provides many free services, such as job search assistance; and offers materials and programs at no cost. During these times of economic hardship, the library is especially vital. Thank you for considering the benefit of this very important institution to our entire community.

Sincerely,
XXXXXX

3. Fix the current library. The current library is NOT ADA compliant and has temporary solutions for structural issues. Fixing it could cost the town over \$11 million (more than the cost to the town for the proposed new library). There would be no state grant. We run the risk of not having a functioning library in town, which means patrons would lose borrowing privileges at other towns' libraries.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

The Friends of the Sharon Public Library and the Sharon Public Library Foundation

[1] Gelerman and Cabral letter dated 4/22/2020 page

3 https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/sharonma/files/news/zba_-_gelerman_and_cabral_memorandum_-_4.22.20.pdf



Copyright © 2020 Friends of the Sharon Public Library, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

