

# **Long Range Plan 2019-2024**

## **New Salem Public Library**

**23 S. Main St.  
New Salem, MA 01355**

Compiled by Diana Smith, Director and  
by the Library Trustees  
Claire McGinnis, Judith Northup-Bennett and Elijah MacCullagh

Accepted on September 19, 2019 by the New Salem Library Trustees

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## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the New Salem Public Library is to provide a community center that supports life-long learning. The library strives to meet residents' needs with educational, recreational and cultural materials by providing print and non-print materials, technological resources and programs for children and adults. The library staff offers service in current technologies and provides vital information services for the community members.

## **User Assessment of Needs**

We sought to learn the community's needs by means of a survey, sent to every household in New Salem and made available online, and a focus group meeting, held at the library in May. While both the survey and focus group responses provided some new ideas, the community's support and goals for the library are consistent with results from past years' surveys and focus groups.

We were appreciative to discover that the New Salem residents are pleased with the operation of the library. The feedback about the staff was overwhelmingly positive. They received extremely high marks for their work and the creation of a welcoming and supportive space for patrons. The New Salem Board of Trustees has entered this next five-year planning process having just completed a significant redesign of the library's interior space to better serve the needs of library patrons and improve space for programming. This update put the library in better sync with how the library is used today. Attending programming and socializing with others were two of the three most commonly reported uses of the library in our long range plan survey.

The renovation created a community room with kitchenette for programming (something that was left out of the original construction), a variety of small spaces for working, reading and meeting, an updated children's area, improved electrical outlets, a new carpeted floor, and a medley of bright colors throughout. The outpouring of community support at all levels to accomplish this project demonstrates how important the library is as a prime cultural center in New Salem. The trustees and director will look to expand social programming to meet these community needs.

This major overhaul of the interior of the library was spearheaded by a visionary core from the Friends of the New Salem Library group who began fundraising and planning for the project in 2017. Working with the Director and the Trustees, the interior renovation was branded "Reimagining Our Library", providing a way to maintain momentum and focus on the project. A first phase was successfully completed in 2019 with a major commitment in staff time, Director time, funding and volunteer labor from the Trustees and the Friends of the Library. A grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts was secured by The Friends. We're very proud that the library remained open on its regular schedule despite the fact that books, materials and furniture were moved several times by volunteers and staff.

A second phase of the Reimagining Project will begin this fall with plans to buy new furniture, refinish the old wood floors, paint, improve storage and entrance space, update lighting, and install of audio-visual equipment.

Feedback showed the inter-library loan service was one of the most important services for patrons. In the last year, 1803 items were requested by patrons through interlibrary loan, and our library provided 2131 items to patrons of other libraries. Our town benefits from networking with area libraries, and we will continue to use these connections to serve our population.

Technology is an important part of the library. Multiple survey responses requested technology programming, teaching how to use new technology and software. The library will begin technology support sessions and work to bring new technology demonstrations to the town.

The request for additional hours was a common request in our survey results. After a decade at 18 open hours per week, NSPL increased to 19 hours per week in 2010, and then to 20 hours per week in 2017. As the library continues to grow as an important social center for the town, we will seek additional support from the town to add another 3 hours of operation per week to the library.

The feedback about the collection shows patrons want to borrow books and dvds, and enjoy browsing the collection. There is a lot of interest in the town to improve the collection of recent bestsellers. The library will work to stay on top of new and popular books, and to improve signage indicating bestsellers available at the library.

The survey results demonstrated that many residents weren't fully aware of the extent of the services and programs offered by the library. Therefore, improving the library's outreach and communication with town residents is a clear need. We will seek to improve the library website and the processes used to post library events and programs. The library will continue to use the New Salem News email newsletter to disseminate relevant library information, and will work to help patrons learn more about the various services provided.

We want to encourage cooperation with the Friends of the Library in their efforts to increase services and programming at the library. The trustees will begin to explore increasing the library's endowment to provide ongoing funding. The library trustees would like to continue our collaboration with the Friends of the Library to find skilled and knowledgeable residents of New Salem to volunteer to help with library programming, the annual book sale, Reading Aloud for Adults, and other events put on by the library.

### **Goals, Objective and Actions**

1. Increase the open library hours.
  - a. Board will ask the town to increase the budget for addition hours for fiscal year, to increase from 19 to 22 hours open to the public. Evenings were requested more often than weekend, which was reiterated in the survey response preferences for the programming times as well. 2020

- b. Director will consider the role of volunteers to manage workload demands on library staff. 2020
- 2. Develop the library as a vital center for cultural and educational programs as well as a gathering place for the community.
  - a. Continue programming throughout the year for adults on various subjects. 2020
  - b. Continue programming throughout the year for children, including the summer reading program. 2020
  - c. Institute regular community social events, such as movie nights and interest groups. 2021
- 3. Maintain and expand the library's collection.
  - a. Continue maintenance of the library's physical collection, weeding out old disused materials and bringing in new. 2020
  - b. Expand the library's online collection of ebooks and explore possible online offerings. 2022
  - c. Continue to provide accessible materials like audiobooks and large print books. 2020
  - d. Continue home delivery to homebound patrons. 2020
- 4. Develop the library's role in the town as technology evolves and high speed internet becomes available.
  - a. Hold "Know your library" sessions to provide an overview to patrons of different facets and services provided by the library, like how to navigate CW-Mars and use online resources. 2020
  - b. Hold regular IT sessions to teach troubleshooting skills for phones, tablets, and computers, and to help patrons acclimate to new technology. 2020
- 5. Make information about library programs and resources readily available to the community.
  - a. Continue to use existing communication tools: town newsletter, signboard, local papers, school news, and website. 2020
  - b. Starting in the Fall of 2019, schedule library programming on a long-range basis (at least 6 months) so that people can plan. Prominently display the long-range calendar in the library and on the website. 2020
  - c. Consult with and research proven methods that other small libraries use to increase attendance and participation in their programming. 2021
  - d. Work with the New Salem Friends group to promote library programming in their regular communications. 2022
  - e. Develop the library website as an information hub, with library programs, events, and orientation for use of library services. Develop methods for the updating of the library website moving forward to improve communication and advertising of library programs. 2023
- 6. Develop library's interior space.

- a. Work with design committee to purchase furniture for new meeting room, YA area and Children’s area. 2020
  - b. Improve efficiency and use of staff area, director’s office, technical services area and purchase furniture for spaces. 2021
  - c. Remove closets by the front door and reconfigure west entrance area. 2021
  - d. Paint entrance ways and director’s office. 2022
  - e. Refinish wood floors. 2020
7. Continue working with the town government to keep up with repairs on this old and treasured town building.
- a. Repair the leaky south portico and structural/siding damage caused by the leaking. 2020
  - b. Secure the heat compressors and repair water damaged siding. 2020
  - c. Begin evaluation of the overall roof repair needs. 2021
  - d. Lighting upgrade. 2021
  - e. Foundation repair. 2023
8. Explore ways to increase the library endowment to provide ongoing library funding.
- a. Research how other small libraries manage and create endowments. Consult with the MBLC to better understand how endowments benefit small libraries. 2020
  - b. Announce and promote endowments for the library. 2022

**Planning Methodology**

The library director and the trustees serve as the long-range planning committee. The committee decided to assess the community needs by creating an open forum focus group and a community wide survey. Once the survey results were in and we had the focus group feedback the trustees wrote up the plan.

Our focus groups held a meeting at the library with various members of the community. The trustees sent out surveys to each household in New Salem. Everyone was encouraged to fill the surveys out. The needs covered by the focus groups and the tabulated survey information have been included in this long-range plan.

Information gathered from the Evergreen library circulation software, counts of patrons made by library staff and other data provided by other government agencies was considered in this long range plan.

**Governing Board Approval**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix**

### **Community Profile**

The town of New Salem is part of Franklin County, and is located in North Central Massachusetts. The land area is 44.08 square miles with a population of approximately 1,000.

Land was granted by the state legislature to the inhabitants of Salem, Massachusetts and according to tradition; the town received its first settler in 1737. Farming was the primary occupation augmented by such trades as mill right and blacksmithing. New Salem prospered in the 1800's and the population rose to 2,145. By 1900 the population diminished to 809 due to the western migration and manufacturing jobs drawing people to urban areas.

The town saw a major change in the 1930's with the construction of the Quabbin Reservoir by the Boston Metropolitan District Commission (MDC). The presence of the reservoir has affected the town in many ways. It has reshaped and reduced the usable area of the town. It has caused the northeastern area of New Salem, called South Athol and Hagerville, to become isolated from the rest of the town. It diminished the taxable land base of the town significantly. Although some residents harbor hard feelings of loss from the taking, or in response to environmental and recreational restrictions imposed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR evolved from MDC as the governing state agency), many value the accidental wilderness and passive recreation created in the town's backyard by the protection of the watershed.

Due to the limited work opportunities within town, its residents find employment from Boston to Northampton, with many commuting to Orange, Athol, Gardner, Amherst or Greenfield. Working at home using phone and technology as remote employees to larger firms is growing in New Salem, but limited by expense of and access limitations to good internet service. A large number of the residents are retired, living in homes or on land owned by their families for more than one generation. Young families and retirees have been attracted by the rural atmosphere and lower housing costs.

A three-member Selectboard and a Town Coordinator govern the town.

### **Library Profile**

The New Salem Public Library (NSPL) was started through the generosity of two sisters, Miss Rebekah Wheeler and Mrs. Eliza Ellis, who established a trust fund from which part of the annual interest was to be used for books for the town library. In April 1889, the trustees purchased 848 volumes for the beginning of the collection. This collection was housed in the town meeting house and opened March 3, 1890.

By 1913, the town meeting house was not large enough to house all the additions and donations of material and the library was moved across the street to the northeast corner of the common, into Old Academy on Academy Street, making it central to the active public high and agricultural school of the Town.

By 1970, the functions of the library again needed new space and the library was relocated to the south side of South Main Street into a building known as the “Old Town Meeting House”. Many renovations to the building were made that year and the next, some of which were: installation of a furnace, insulation of the building, wiring, interior and exterior light fixtures, book shelves installed, the platform removed and the floor refinished. In 1986, a handicapped accessible bathroom was built and the building was made handicapped accessible in 1995, thus bringing the building into compliance with the American with Disabilities act.

In 1999, the program was bursting the seams of the building, and a special town meeting approved \$70,000 for the purchase and renovation of a bookstore property for a library move across the street to the north side of South Main, which remains the current Library location. The Library received a building and design grant from the MBLC that same year. Following the MBLC process and a short sit on the waiting list, \$286,530 was awarded in 2004, a Building Committee was formed, and the former bookstore building was successfully renovated. Bids exceeded expectations and a large meeting room was removed from the plans to bring the project costs back into balance with resources.

In this current form and location, the NSPL is located in the Historical District, in New Salem Center, off Route 202. The exterior of the building is white clapboard with copper covered archways over the front and side doors. There are many large windows, with a bay window facing the main street. As common to small rural libraries, the interior is a combination of stacks, table and chair seating, computing equipment furniture, and comfortable reading seating. The children’s area combines a floor play space with the bookcases, and appealing child size furniture.

The library is governed by a three-member Board of Trustees and operated by a part-time Director of 19 hours per week. Two additional staff members work 21 hours a week with one of those hours after closing time for cataloging items. Funding for staffing programs is paid in addition to regular staff hours.

The NSPL is currently open 20 hours a week. Our hours are Tuesday 12:00 to 8:00pm, Thursday 10:00am to 6:00pm and Saturday 10:00am to 2:00pm. The library collection includes 10,515 books, 1089 audio books and music, 2,635 DVDs and videos, 438 periodicals, 51 items in electronic format and 38 puzzles and games for children and adults. This is a total of 14,759 items. We continue to weed our collection to keep it current.

We have 4 desktop computers and 2 laptops for patron use and our internet service has a speed of 3.8 download and 9.4 upload. We will switch to the town internet in July 2020. We have wifi that is used even when the library is closed.

There are 1,017 residents in New Salem and 512 are registered borrowers. We are a mini-net member of C/WMARS and everyone enjoys all the services we are able to provide. Our circulation for the fiscal year 2019 was 12,801.