



December 12, 2018

We are writing to address the concerns raised by Mary Layton and Christ Katucki about the Norwich Public Library budget and the town appropriation request for funds.

It is absolutely appropriate for town officials to pay close attention to how taxpayer funds are allocated. However, the percentage increases being described are misleading. We'd like to start with a more accurate overview of the amounts being requested for 2019.

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In 2018 the town generously voted to provide \$275,000 for NPL operations, representing a 0.7% increase from the previous year. In 2019, NPL is planning to make two separate requests: \$283,000 for general operating funds, representing a 2.82% increase, and a separate \$50,000 request for capital expenses. The operating request would contribute to the library's overall FY20 budget of \$396,000, with the remainder of the budget being raised through donations.

The capital request is designed to address maintenance issues in the building. We don't intend to make a capital request every year. We deliberately chose to make these appropriation requests separate so that townspeople could see the difference in how the funding would be utilized.

The NPL is dedicated to serving the entire Norwich community. We see the library as a community hub and center, second only to Dan & Whit's. But it is worth highlighting that NPL is not officially part of town government; we are not a municipal library. Founded in 1888, the NPL is an incorporated library – a non-profit institution, overseen by a board of trustees. Incorporated libraries, while unusual in other parts of the country, are common in Vermont. Many of our neighboring libraries are similarly structured, including Woodstock, Thetford, Rutland and Montpelier. We believe that this model actually saves money for the town of Norwich. In other towns, Stowe for example, the entire budget is covered by the town including employees, pensions, and other required benefits. In this case, NPL raises 28.5% of its own budget and personnel expenses are lower.

As for the concern that the town has no oversight of the library, the library is overseen by a very able board of trustees, all members of the Norwich community and tax payers themselves. Because of the Library's open and collaborative relationship with the town, we make a point of presenting our full budget at Town Meeting. In addition, our finances and all monthly board meetings are open to public. We would welcome your participation.

We are so incredibly grateful to the town for its consistent and enthusiastic support. We take our obligations to serve the town very seriously. Please do not hesitate to come to us with any questions or concerns.

Karen Harris  
President

Lucinda H. Walker  
Library Director

**One Library, Many Stories. What's Yours?**