

Woman's Round Lake Improvement Society

PO Box 665 | Round Lake | NY | 12151

Diane Marchand
Nancy Theissen
Angela DeMeritt
Jennifer Hurd

Peter Sheridan
*Lydia Hoffman
*Gary Putman

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THE SURVEY INCLUDED WITH THIS LETTER BEFORE AUGUST 25

August 16, 2017

Dear Round Lake resident:

You probably heard that the Woman's Round Lake Improvement Society (WRLIS) formed a library study group and has been working with an architectural consultant to determine the future of the Round Lake Library. The reason for this project is that the need for library services will eventually outstrip the current library facilities which are the Clark House in Round Lake and the Malta Branch in the Malta Community Center. The first phase of this project is complete, and a summary of the study is available on WRLIS' website and at the libraries. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with background information about the library and the library study and ask you to express your opinion about WRLIS' next actions with respect to the library.

Background

WRLIS operated a library in Round Lake before the State's charter system existed. A charter was issued by New York to WRLIS in 1900 to operate a library in Round Lake and the charter was expanded to include the Town of Malta in 1976. The charter requires WRLIS meet the needs of the community it serves. Malta is growing quickly, and the way people use libraries has changed dramatically. WRLIS undertook the study to determine the best ways for WRLIS to continue to serve the community and to meet WRLIS' obligations under the charter into the future.

The Process

WRLIS hired Paul Mays, an architect with the firm Butler, Rowland, Mays Architects, LLP (in Ballston Spa) to assist WRLIS with this project. Paul and his firm have worked extensively in planning and designing/redesigning libraries.

* Gary and Lydia participated only in preparing and distributing this letter and survey. They are not part of the library study committee.

The process began three years ago with input from citizens in Round Lake and in Malta about what the community most wanted to see in their library. In Round Lake, the overwhelming wish was the ability to walk to the library in the Village.

The study group met frequently with Paul, travelled to libraries of different sizes and character and discussed the pros and cons of features that could be a part of a library design. Paul provided the nuts and bolts information about the amount of library space that should be planned for a community of our size (the Town of Malta with a population of just over 15,000 in 2015), the features that typically make a library work well (everything from the kinds of public spaces, staff access and work space, collection management tools, to the size and placement of windows, and managing costs) and the technical requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable statutes and regulations.

The study group also asked Paul to consider the continued use of Clark House, and to identify the type and extent of changes that would keep Clark House a viable piece of providing library services in Malta.

The summary report walks through the advantages and deficits of existing and proposed sites and details the goals addressed in the options for future actions.

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to identify the future library needs for the Town of Malta and the options available to best meet those needs.

The needs/findings:

- The standard for library space is 1-1 ½ square feet of library space per resident. The existing arrangement provides about 6,000 total square feet (2,000 in Clark House and 4,000 in Malta) which is a substantial shortfall.
- A library should provide ample public spaces for both meetings (study, community groups, book clubs, tutoring) and for other uses (quiet and comfortable reading chairs, special collections).
- The community would benefit from an “event” space that could accommodate 100-150 people for lectures, programs and larger meetings. Being able to serve food/drink is a big plus.
- A robust children’s program and facilities to allow a range of activities is very important to the community and to a healthy library.
- Purchasing property to meet the community’s needs in Malta is prohibitively expensive (property needs to be close to main roads with adequate parking).
- Keeping library services in the Village of Round Lake is of primary importance.

The way to meet the most of these needs:

- A new library in Round Lake that would be larger than the existing facility at Clark House would incorporate many of the identified needs, address the existing deficits in the WRLIS libraries, and would enable WRLIS to continue to provide library services with the capability of being flexible both physically and to address changing needs of library users; and
- Keep the Malta Branch to locate services closer to the geographic center of the service area, including book pick up and drop off.

Now

At this point WRLIS is considering the next course of action and has identified three roads:

1) Take no action but continue maintaining Clark House and update as possible. Without taking action, WRLIS will be less and less able to meet the needs of the library service area as required by the charter.

2) Pursue the recommendations in Paul Mays' study. This would involve a considerable long term effort by WRLIS to develop and refine plans for, fund, and eventually build a new library, with hurdles at every step. Note that WRLIS is organized as an "association library" under New York State law and is therefore prohibited from funding a new building from taxpayer dollars. Even when residents vote to authorize a tax for the support of the library, the tax money may only be used for operating expenses and may not be used for building a new facility.

3) The study did not pursue a third option in depth, but some wish to consider adding onto Clark House by building onto the existing structure and into the "library lawn" property owned by WRLIS (adjoining the post office building). This proposal would require further study. Issues that are likely to arise include: 1) alteration to the existing building to this degree will require substantial expense in bringing the building into compliance with existing code and laws (including the ADA); 2) a change in character of this part of the Village (by building on existing green space in the center of the Village) and a change to the character of the existing building; 3) even with the expansion the relatively small and limited space available to build an addition will make it challenging to meet the needs of the library; and 4) some of the most pressing problems (such as parking) will not be addressed.

There is no question that the residents of Round Lake have a special relationship with their library. The actual building embodies the feelings of community and our unique Village history. It is one of the literal and figurative centers of our community and there is genuine fear that this change will result in losing our center. However, the reality is that Clark House has a very limited ability to provide the necessary services and it is very costly to maintain.

It is important to note that if sometime in the future WRLIS' possession of the library charter is threatened because WRLIS is failing to provide library services to Malta as required by the charter, it will probably be too late to come up with a plan. This study project was undertaken not

August 16, 2017

Page 4

to undermine our existing community, but to shape the library's future so even if Clark House cannot function as a library in the future there can be a library in Round Lake, providing the services we value now and will need in the future, still in a walkable community setting.

Next Steps

There is no vote scheduled on any of these issues. If and when a vote is scheduled, under the WRLIS constitution only WRLIS members are permitted to vote, but we would like to know what you think.

On the enclosed survey, please indicate which of the options described above you would chose. In the space below feel free to provide any questions or thoughts you have. WRLIS will use the survey responses to inform decisions about next steps as we think about the future of the library in Round Lake and the Town of Malta.

Finally, you are reminded that any Village resident can join WRLIS and become a voting member. Cost is \$15 a year (\$20 for a family). Assistance is available if this fee is burdensome. You must attend four meetings in a year to vote.

Thank you for your time and your thoughtful consideration of this issue,

Sincerely,

The Library Study Committee