

# Pandemic Blocks Progress on Snow Library Project

by Ed Maroney

ORLEANS — Snow Library has been fighting back against the pandemic with on-line programs and curbside pick-up, the latter just expanded to six days a week. But the global crisis has prompted the state's library commissioners to forgo a new round of planning grants, one of which Snow trustees intended to seek in their effort to expand or build a new library.

"We have been told by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners that they will not be offering a new grant round until they have funded the existing grant list and have no idea when funds will be available to offer a new grant round," Cheryl Bryan, chair of Snow's facilities advisory committee, wrote to trustees chair Mary Beth Fincke last month. "Under the current economic conditions because of the COVID virus that will not be soon."

In her letter, Bryan resigned as chair of the facilities committee and suggested its dissolution "until the economy recovers and we know funding a new library will be a possibility. At such time I remain willing to serve the library in working for a badly needed new facility."

Steve Gass, who was elected chair of the trustees July 14, also serves on the facilities committee. Last week, he listed the accomplishments of the latter group over the last two years in "developing a new program for a reimagined Snow Library." These included hiring an architect and a



Snow Library won't be open to patrons until sometime in September, but there's a lot going on inside and outside the Main Street building.

ED MARONEY PHOTO

library planning assistant, completing a facilities study of the existing building, and developing a building program, all in preparation for applying for a state design grant and, eventually, a construction grant. These typically pay 30 to 40 percent of the cost, he said.

"So the question is what we should do as an active committee given the current freeze on applications for design grants," Gass told his fellow trustees last week. "Cheryl has her reading of the situation — she has had a lot of experience working with the library building commissioners — (that

really there's nothing more for us to do in the immediate future, that being certainly this next year, until we know the state has approved money for another round."

The trustees agreed that Gass should call the committee together so its members could have a discussion and make a recommendation regarding its status to the board, which will meet again Aug. 11. "(It's) kind of senseless to continue until there's a realistic possibility," trustee Mary Reuland said, "but I like the idea of having a meeting and looking at what was accomplished. It was quite a bit."

Trustee Marilyn Bornemeier said the "next charge of the committee was to reach out and educate the community about the need you discovered. The members were very valuable to the process. Maybe they can resolve to meet again as a committee in a year or whatever."

Select Board Chair Kevin Galligan, that body's liaison to the trustees, suggested a push in the state Legislature to guarantee funding for library projects. "To be at the whim of (state) bond funding doesn't provide certainty for planning," he said. "The school building authority has a dedicated funding stream... You guys have done so much work planning. It's going to get stale very quickly. I'd hate to redo all that work."

Last week's meeting included a report on services from Library Director Tavi Prugno. "Curbside service has been very successful," he said, noting that hours have

been extended to 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. By Aug. 3, there will be evening hours again, but only two people will be on duty to answer questions and make curbside pickup reservations.

Given the protocols involved in sanitizing the library and the high numbers of summer residents and visitors coming to the region, Prugno said, libraries from Brewster and Harwich to Provincetown are all thinking about reopening sometime in September. When patrons return, they'll see plastic shields at the circulation, reference, and youth services desks. Another coming attraction is a public drinking fountain, which Prugno called "the second most requested thing" at the library, the first being more parking. The piping wasn't right for locating it near the first floor bathrooms, so it will be found just outside the newspaper and magazine area known as the Harry Snow Reading Room. The fountain will have a bottle refill option.

Lots is happening online, including development of a new library website. The Caravan Puppets will make a virtual appearance Aug. 13, and another Zoom crafts workshop is set for Aug. 6. Even the Friends of Snow Library is thinking about an online book sale this summer, and this fall there will be 15 Lifetime Learning courses presented in the Craine Gallery and on Zoom plus five online only and four only at the library.



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