

**GREAT BARRINGTON
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE**

APPLICATION FOR CPA FUNDING – Step 1

Date Received (for office use only) _____

Library Trustees on behalf of Town of Great Barrington

Applicant Name _____

Ramsdell Library Capital Renovation and Improvement Project

Project Name _____

Project Address _____ 1087 Main St. Housatonic, MA 01236

Contact Person _____ Patrick Hollenbeck _____ Chair, Library Trustees

Title: _____

617-212-9840 patorch@msn.com

Phone No. _____ Email _____

Brief Project Description (attach up to 1 additional page if necessary)

Requirement for the application of Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
Construction Grant.

We have received endorsement of the Housatonic Improvement Committee.

Amount of CPA funding you are seeking: _____ \$150,000

May 31, 2024

When do you request the CPA funding be received by your project? _____

Property Owner (if different from applicant)

Town of Great Barrington

Owner's Name _____

344 Main St. Great Barrington, MA 01230

Owner's Address _____

413-528-1619 crembold@townofgb.org

Phone No. _____ Email: _____

If Owner is different from applicant, you must include a letter signed by the Owner giving permission to apply for funds for the specified project on the Owner's property.

In the following chart, mark the box(es) that best apply to your project.

Boxes with an X through them are not CPA eligible activities. Contact the Town Planner if you need more information.

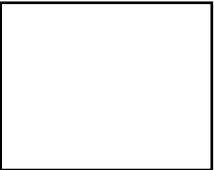


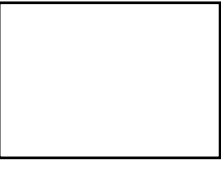

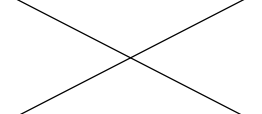
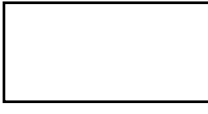




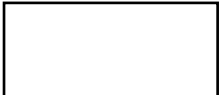
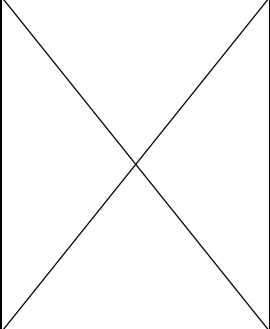
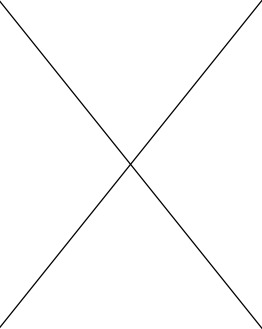
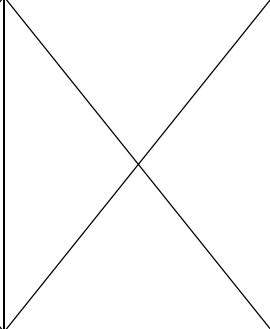
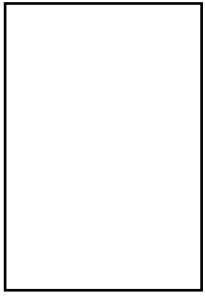
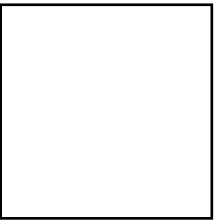
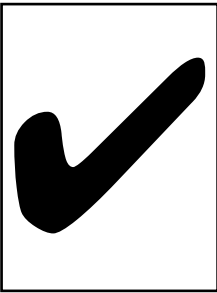
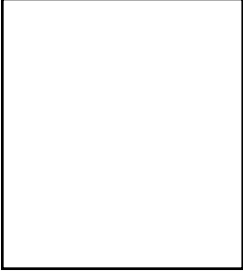
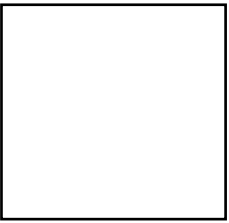
	OPEN SPACE	HISTORIC RESOURCES	RECREATIONAL LAND	COMMUNITY HOUSING
Activities (refer to Glossary for definitions)	Land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas, watershed land, agricultural land, grasslands, fields, forest land, wetland, river, stream, lake and pond frontage, land to protect scenic vistas, land for wildlife or nature preserve, and land for recreation use.	Building, structure, vessel, real property, document or artifact listed on the state register of historic places or determined by the local historic preservation commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture or culture of the city or town.	Land for active or passive recreational use including, but not limited to, the use of land for community gardens, trails, and noncommercial youth and adult sports, and the use of land as a park, playground or athletic field. Does not include horse or dog racing or the use of land for a stadium, gymnasium or similar structure.	Housing for low and moderate income individuals and families, including low or moderate income seniors. Moderate income is less than 100%, and low income is less than 80%, of US HUD Area Wide Median Income.
ACQUISITION Obtain property interest by gift, purchase, devise, grant, rental, rental purchase, lease or otherwise. Only includes eminent domain taking as provided by G.L. c. 44B				
CREATION To bring into being or cause to exist. <i>Seideman v. City of Newton</i> , 452 Mass. 472 (2008)				
PRESERVATION Protect personal or real property from injury, harm or destruction				
SUPPORT Provide grants, loans, rental assistance, security deposits, interest-rate write downs or other forms of assistance directly to individuals and families who are eligible for community housing, or to entity that owns, operates or manages such housing, for the purpose of making housing affordable				
REHABILITATION AND/OR RESTORATION Make capital improvements, or extraordinary repairs to make assets functional for intended use, including improvements to comply with federal, state or local building or access codes or federal standards for rehabilitation of historic properties	Only applies if property was acquired or created with CPA funds 			Only applies if housing was acquired or created with CPA funds 

Chart adapted from "Recent Developments in Municipal Law", Massachusetts Department of Revenue, October 2012.

End of Step 1 application

**GREAT BARRINGTON
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE**

APPLICATION FOR CPA FUNDING – Step 2

Date Received (for office use only) _____

All applicants submitting Step 2 must include a copy of their Step 1 application.

All applicants must answer questions 1-11, and question 19. For question 12-18, only answer questions that are applicable to your CPA area. For example, if your project has to do with Historical Preservation but does not include Housing, then you may skip questions 12, 13 and 14, but you must answer all questions under the subheading “Historical Preservation Projects.”

You may attach additional sheets as necessary to answer the numbered questions, up to a maximum of 8 additional pages of narrative. These additional pages must be formatted with a minimum 11 point font, 1 inch margins. If your project combines two or more CPA priorities, such as Community Housing AND Open Space, then you must answer ALL questions under both of those 2 subheadings and you may include up to 10 additional pages of narrative. (Please note Open Space and Recreation is considered one CPA priority.)

All pages must be numbered. Please number each attached Page 1 of 8, Page 2 of 8, etc. If your answers are on separate sheets, also number each answer so that it corresponds with the number of the question you are answering.

Great Barrington Board of Library Trustees

Applicant Name _____

Ramsdell Capital Renovation and Improvement Project

Project Name _____

1087 Main St. Housatonic, MA 01236

Project Address _____

2 3

Assessor's Map _____ Lot _____

193 446

Property Deed Book / Page _____ / _____

1.) Project Budget (list all sources and uses, including grants, fundraising, etc.)

150,000

Total CPA funds requested: \$_____

Fill in the chart below showing all project sources and uses, including requested CPA funds:

Source Name	Amount	% of total	Used for	Committed?
See next page				
Total budget:				

1.) Project Budget*

Chart 1

Source Name	Amount	% of Total	Used for	Committed ?
CPA Sp. Rd. 2023	\$50,000	1%	Initial Planning	Yes
CPA FY 2025	\$150,000	3%	MBLC requirement for application of grant and if accepted to use for Design/Planning	No
CPA FY2026	\$250,000	5%	Construction	No
MBLC Grant FY25	\$3,000,000	60%	Construction	TBD FY25
Town CPA/CIP (2025-2026)	\$1,000,000	20%	Construction	No
Private Fund Raising	\$550,000	11%	Construction	No
Total	\$5,000,000	100%	Total Project	No

Project management, oversight, engineering and administrative costs will be included in the budget noted above. We are actively securing Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBCL) Construction Grant. This grant is available every 8-10 years.

*These are projected numbers.

2.) Timing of Funds

A. MBLC Funding Timeline:

Chart 2A

Date	Event	Responsible Party
Now till May 2024	Community analysis and updating of "Building Program," detailed construction assessment to library standards, prepare grant application. (CPA special round grant funding)	Library Trustees/ Library Renovation Project Committee
May 31, 2024	MBLC grant Application due with certified funding of \$150,000 from municipality.	Library Trustees/ Library Renovation Project Committee
June-August 2024	Independent review of applications, include site visits.	MBLC Construction Committee
September 2024	Grant Applications recommended to MBLC Director.	MBLC Construction Committee

October 2024	Commissioners vote to approve immediately funded and waitlisted grant recipients; MBLC contracts executed with grant recipients	MBLC Comissioners/Town Manager
October 2024- December 2025	Planning and Design for Standard Grant recipients. (This is where the \$150,000 will be used.)	Library Renovation Project Committee

B. If Ramsdell receives the MBLC Grant:

Chart 2B

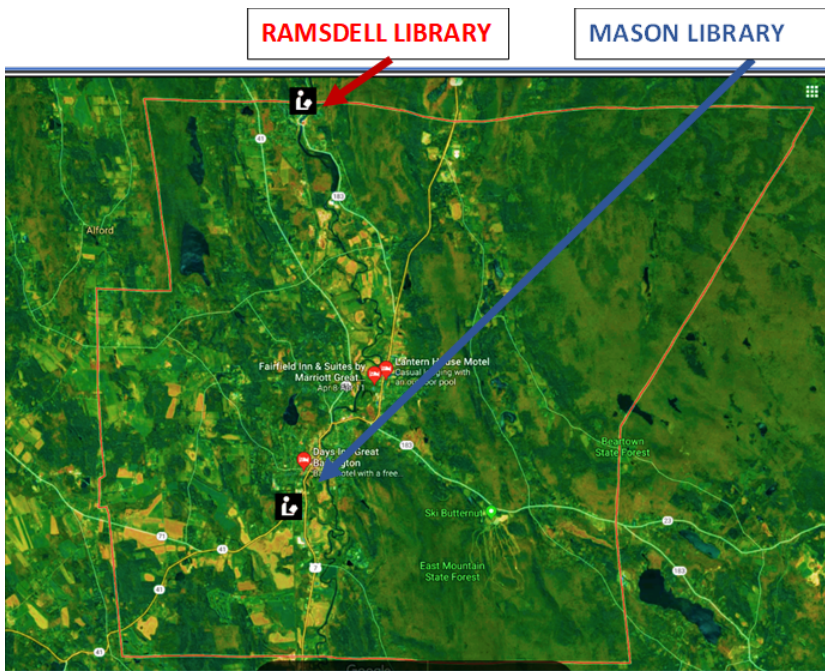
October 2024-December 2025	Planning & Design for Standard Grant recipients
December 2025-January 2026	Independent review of MPLCP Level of Design
February 2026	Estimates based on MPLCP Level of Design; Construction Phase of grant awards calculated
March 2026	Commissioners vote to approve Construction phase grant awards
March-June 2026	Certified votes for local approvals and appropriations for Construction phase local funding
June 2026-June 2027	Design work from completion of schematic design through construction documents
July 2027	Bidding
August 2027	Construction contracts for projects (usually 16-24 months)

C. Funding Details:

Chart 2C

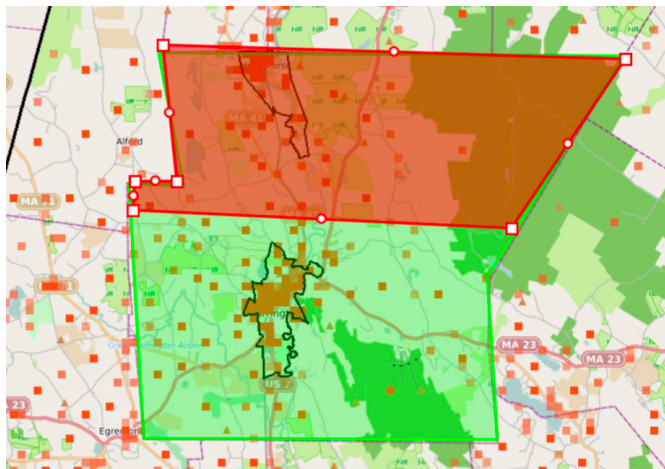
Planning and Design Phase	CPA funding of \$150,000 will be used here from this round FY 25 along with MBLC contribution of \$100,000 max.	October 2024
Construction Phase	60% of estimated eligible cost up to \$5,000,000.	December 2025
Community Economic Need Factor (using 2023 State Equalized Evaluation and DRI income figures range from 0% to 20% to base award.) GB is 6.04%	Total award: may not exceed 75% of estimated eligible costs of the project.	December 2025 and later
Sustainable and Resilient Design	Green Library Incentive gets additional 3% of its total construction grant award.	December 2025 and later

3.) Existing use or deed restrictions, permanent easement, historical designations, special permits, etc. if any:



Located in the northeastern most corner of town, Ramsdell Library was given to the town in the will of Theodore H. Ramsdell, owner of Monument Mills, who directed his heirs to erect and equip a public library to benefit village residents. It was his son, T. Ellis Ramsdell, who entered into an agreement with Boston architects McLean & Wright, who ultimately designed this architectural gem, built in the Beaux-Arts style, which opened to the public in 1908 on the site of the first house built in Housatonic a century prior. The building's second floor, known widely as "The Great Hall", served as a thriving community space hosting concerts, dances and theater performances; an expansion, at the dawn of The Great Depression, was carried out

by the Pittsfield firm of Harding & Seaver. In 2014, Ramsdell Library was placed on the National Register of Historic Places; despite scant transitional hours at the time of this writing, it remains the only public building in Housatonic poised to dramatically invigorate the surrounding area. In recent years, there has been a widespread call for the restoration of this vital space accessible to all in the Great Barrington community at large, including the next generation.



Roughly 2,000 to 2,300 of the total 7,104 residents of Great Barrington could be considered in the Ramsdell Library Service Area.

Some may say that our town does not need two libraries. Why did Ramsdell bequeath so much money for a library in the village of Housatonic? Why should we continue to preserve his legacy?

The statistics speak for itself. We actually have TWO TOWNS IN ONE. In square miles, Great Barrington is the largest town in Berkshire County with our Housatonic hamlet at the northern tip. Yet, Housatonic is about the population size of Monterey or Egremont, so we need both libraries. Ramsdell is centrally located in its hamlet and walkable for its many families. Further, with Housatonic's median income 25% lower than GB center, many do not have cars.

4.) Proposed Use or Deed Restrictions after Project Completion (in accordance with CPA rules):

Per registry of deed dated June 27, 1908, T. Ellis Ramsdell conveyed the library building with "express condition that the grantees and their successors and assigns shall forever hold, support and maintain the property hereby conveyed as a free Public Library for the use of the inhabitants of said Great Barrington and if the grantees shall fail to keep and perform said condition then and insuch event this deed shall be null and void and the premises hereby conveyed together with the personal property above mentioned shall revert and revert in me the said grantor and my heirs and assigns.

5.) Describe the project team, including project management personnel, design professionals, contractors, and other applicable consultants, their relevant experience, so forth. Attach additional pages/resumes as needed.

Scope



Kimberly Bolan and Associates (KBA) was tasked with reviewing Ramsdell Library's facility and services. Ramsdell Library is one of the two Great Barrington Libraries located at 1087 Main Street, Housatonic, MA. KBA's specific scope for the project included:

- ✓ Gathering stakeholder input through community and staff discussion groups
- ✓ Conducting a community survey (online and paper formats)
- ✓ Completing a building review
- ✓ Reviewing library facility plans previously developed by Drummey Rosane Anderson Inc.
- ✓ Developing recommendations and a future vision and direction for the library



2

Kimberly Bolan and Associates, LLC
www.kbaonline.com

The capital request was initiated with the 2018 study completed by Kimberly Bolan and Associates (KBA) following the 2013 Master Plan for Great Barrington. The Plan outlined the need and rationale for renovating the Ramsdell Library as a historical project, a community gathering space, and a learning facility. It outlined the need for ADA compliance as well the reuse of its second floor (which had been known as the "Great Hall" now is mixed use as a storage facility to be developed into an expansive usable space.

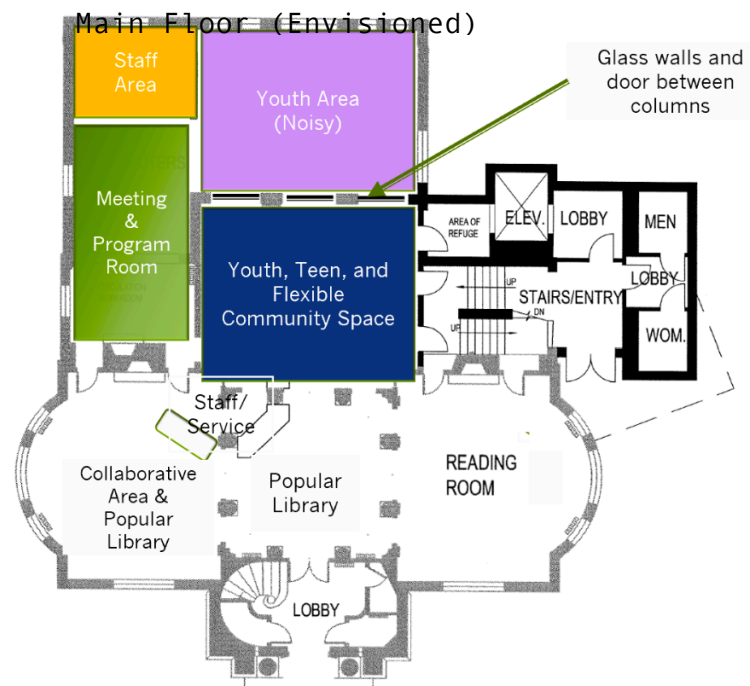
While the goal is to expend planning monies to revise the plans that were initially drawn during the envisioning plans of 2018, these drawings help to describe a more modern ADA compliant space.

The parking area and ADA compliant entrance was designed here.

Redesigned main floor makes the space more functional for a library, including a glass wall to contain sound and space for "library of things."

This redesign can double public enjoyable space without changing the footprint.

The graph below created by the Kimberly Bolan Associates shows the correct historically-compliant recommendations for Ramsdell Library. The ADA Addition, shown in the blue, had designated it at the back-side of the building, adjacent to the ADA Parking area (in Black), with a nearby materials return facility.



The Ramsdell Renovation Project

Committee will be formally organized in the next few months. As required by MBLC, this project committee will involve community members volunteering their expertise in finance, construction, architectural design, law, as well as trustee board members.

We are looking forward to continuing our work with ReThinking Libraries, whose clientele are exclusively libraries across the country. We have experience with their work in the Ramsdell Facility Vision Report dated 2018 and the Ramsdell Library Building Program from June 2020. (See Town website under Library) However, with the Covid pandemic interruption, many requirements have changed and an up to date Building program is needed to fulfill the

sustainability requirement of 30 years.)

They built their business around helping clients to see their institutions differently and embrace changes to become more vibrant, 21st century libraries.

Principal consultants of ReThinking Libraries include: Rob Cullin, Janet Nelson, Randy Maxey, Kathy Stewart.

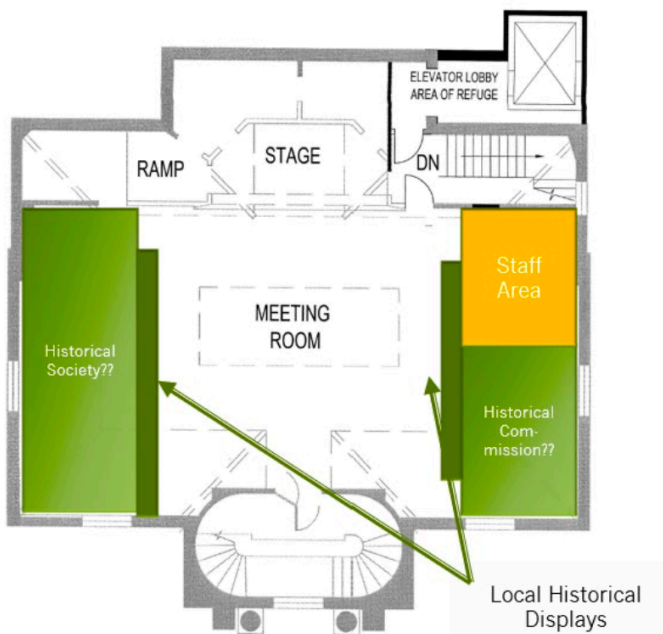
- Recent clients include Mary Riley Styles Public Library, Falls Church, Va, Greenwich Public Library, Ct., Hudson Area Library, Hudson, NY, Joshua Hyde Public Library, Westborough Public Library, MA to name a few. Some of these libraries have been visited by Library Trustees.
- Services include facilities assessments, feasibility studies, community needs assessments, psychographic profiling and analysis, addressing area trends, operational efficiency reviews, organizational structure, programming, collection and service point analysis. Space planning and marketing strategies along with library transformation such as maker space, AV studios, digital creativity centers, improving web-based access and collaborative spaces.

ReThinking Libraries will assist us to select sources for detailed design and planning as well as further subcontracting to reputable construction companies to match needs assessment to the actual historical building.

ReThinking Libraries - 7249 Arbuckle Commons, Suite 438, Brownsburg, IN 46112 Phone: 317.509.3268 \\ <https://www.rethinkinglibraries.org/about>

Upper Floor (Envisioned)

Lower Floor (Envisioned)



We are aware that fundraising is NOT part of the CPA grant but would like the committee to be aware that we have lined up financial consulting sources through guidance from Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires (NPC.) Founder Liana Toscanini was voted one of 25 most dedicated, creative & influential people of 2018. Liana's passions include community building and historic restorations. Through her guidance, on behalf of the town, the library trustees will work diligently in matters of private fundraising. Another source is the following:

FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY PO BOX 2778, AMHERST, MA 01004
413.253.0239, info@financialdevelopmentagency.com

We have received information on services of the Financial Development Agency, Matthew Blumenfeld, principal, out of Amherst, Massachusetts. Since 1981, the company has provided services including planning and organizational management, fundraising management, grant management, strategic planning, etc. Portfolio includes Holyoke Public Library, NPR, Roeliff Jansen Community Library, Berkshire Botanical Gardens, Berkshire Medical Center, West Springfield Public Library and Wilbraham Public Library. Working closely with their expertise, we are confident in being able to provide private funding support through Friends of the Library which has a 501(c)(3) nonprofit designation.

MATTHEW BLUMENFELD, *PRINCIPAL*, TREASURER

Matt began his development career in 1988 as a development associate, and then director of development at a think tank in San Francisco. After completing graduate studies, Matt worked for Forbes Magazine and then founded Bola Associates, a consulting firm in New York to service clients in non-profit housing development, inner-city education, and arts-in-education. In 1995, Matt moved his firm to Massachusetts, and in 2000 merged Bola Associates with FDA. During

his career, Matt has raised more than \$50 million for clients in education, libraries, museums, housing and homeless sheltering, land conservation and environmental advocacy, arts-in-education and the arts. Recent career highlights have included completing a \$9 million library project in Chicopee, developing new mentoring and tutoring initiatives for the Springfield School Volunteers, assisting the New England Forestry Foundation in developing and implementing a \$28 million campaign to secure 700,000+ acres of Maine forest land, and securing several million dollars in New Markets Tax Credits for Holyoke Public Library capital campaign project. Matt graduated from Oberlin College with a B.A. in history and government and received a Master of Arts Degree from the University of California, San Diego in 1990.

6.) Consistency: Describe how the proposed project is consistent with the Community Preservation Plan and with the Great Barrington Master Plan.

- This is a town-sponsored project which would otherwise have to be funded through the capital budget. For the FY2025, this project fits the highest priority as a project on town-owned property.
- Public Benefit- project plan to provide new gathering space with full ADA compliance, cultural center for life-long education for all ages.
- Leverage- additional grant procurement through state grants and private fundraising.
- Multiple Community Preservation Purposes- preservation of historical building as well as providing gathering space for all include those newcomers from new affordable housing community members.
- Community Input and Support- Please see letters of endorsement as well as community survey this summer in our Library Strategic Plan.
- This investment will be ensured for at least 30 years or more of sustainability as per standard requirement of any MBLC Construction project.
- The type of renovation needed for renovating the Ramsdell could easily reach at least one third of the value of the building triggering a need for full renovation and not piecemeal work by the town.

The 2013 Master Plan names the renovation of Ramsdell as a strategic priority. The 2020 Library Building Program (see GB town website under library) was a direct result of the Master Plan. Out of the four challenges cited at the beginning of the 2013 Master Plan (MP), the Ramsdell Capital Renovation and Improvement Project deals with all four challenges.

1. Our old infrastructure needs repair and/or replacement.... Buildings needs major renovations to get it up to code.
2. Our population is aging, and town services and facilities must support ...ADA accessibility and cultural services for all ages also walkable source of programming.
3. Our economy has shifted from manufacturing to services, and we need a more diversified, higher-paying economic base....the library will be resource center for entrepreneurs as well as digital literacy.
4. Planning must consider the likely effects of climate change...MBLC construction grant has strict requirements for sustainability for at least 30 years onward.

These are the Master Plan Strategies that fit our present project:

- Strategy LU H.6: Evolve Ramsdell Library to serve 21st Century needs, using the grant-funded accessibility designs as a starting point, and recognizing that library may take the place of the school as the village's civic space.
- Strategy OSR 5.2: Conduct walkability studies, as was recently done in Housatonic, to identify where improvements to sidewalks and crosswalks are needed and where connections can be made. Use these studies to inform the Capital Improvement Plan. Marshal town funds, CPA funds, and whatever private funds become available to accomplish these connections.
- Strategy SF 3.2: Make accessibility improvements to the Ramsdell Library. Because of the cost of these improvements, grant funding will be required. This is a medium to long term priority. If funding is limited, consider a partnership with private non-profit agencies.
- Strategy SF 3.3: In concert with the resolution of the Housatonic School, consider improving the Housatonic Community Center with a community room on the southern or eastern sides. Either this building or an improved and accessible Ramsdell library would be logical locations if senior services demands required program space in Housatonic.

Quoted from the Master Plan from 2013:

- The future of Ramsdell Library deserves serious debate. As a stand-alone library, it is underused, according to data about visitation. With over 8,000 square feet, it is a substantial facility.But the Ramsdell library is much loved by the dedicated patrons who use its services. It allows the town to maintain a larger overall collection. Dating from 1908, it is a beautiful, historic fixture in Housatonic. And it can serve as a public meeting space.
- Thus Ramsdell should be retained for community use in some fashion, especially if the Housatonic school is not retained. (It was sold just this past month.) The library could be transformed to include space for a café, meeting rooms, performances, or office spaces.
- The building needs improvements, to allow it to be used by a wider audience and make it viable in the long term. It is not universally accessible.....and the front doors are too narrow to meet current accessibility standards. The second floor, which has a stage and could be a wonderful performance space, is reached only by narrow staircases. Because it thus cannot be used for public meetings, it now serves as a storage room for the historical society's collection. In 2010, the town applied part of Community Development Block Grant to develop a construction-ready set of plans to make the library handicapped accessible. The plans call for the addition of an elevator to the north east corner of the building, new restrooms, and an improved interior layout including wider aisles. It also included full access to both the basement and the second floor.

7.) Town Projects: Is the proposed project for a town-owned asset? **Yes.** If yes, please describe funding options. For example, what portion of the project budget is CPA funding? If CPA funds are not received, what are the alternative funding options, if any?
—See Chart 1 at the beginning.

8.) Public Benefits: Describe the public benefits of the project.

***"A public library is, depending on your choice of metaphor, either an act of faith or a bet. The proposition: If we can make information and ideas—in short, human knowledge—easily accessible to average people, then they're not only likely to lead richer and more productive lives, but they are also more likely to contribute to making the overall community richer and more productive."** —Why We Need Public Libraries Now More than Ever, Boston City Life by Tom McGrath, 11/12/2023.*

Housatonic is a village about the size of Egremont or Monterey. Ramsdell is in the town center and is a natural gathering place for events, workshops, meetings, after-school programs. This fills a void that was identified over and over again in surveys and community meetings. With GB's population changing, where the growth of the Spanish-speaking sector has increased, an opportunity to meet their needs would be a major benefit. This could include bilingual tutoring and cultural programs as well as a Spanish section of books and movies. Ramsdell's unique collection of "library of things" such as a sewing machine or telescope set is always available. It is especially useful to the Housatonic community that has a median household income 25% lower than those living in the center of Great Barrington. Our Assistant Town Manager of Planning has also noted that new multi-family housing built or approved since 2013 will involve 1,000 people occupying these new units. This does not include growth in single or dual family homes. The use of Ramsdell to offer community activities and meeting spaces would be a much-needed benefit for all. With expansion of usable space at Ramsdell, more specialization of the collection could also move from Mason to Ramsdell and enable Mason to reallocate its much needed space as well.



Renovation using FY24 round of state funding will prevent further decay and inflationary cost of a historical building that can be a site of community gathering, activity and learning spaces for all ages as well as research and quiet study spaces right in the middle of the Housatonic Village. This site will be a fountain of knowledge for all who seek it. It is within walking distance for those who live close and offer quiet spaces for those who would like to avoid the bustle of the downtown traffic.

2010 Rally to keep Ramsdell open, Berkshire Eagle, David Scribner

9.) Leverage: Will the CPA funds be used to leverage or supplement other funding for this project? Please explain other sources and whether they have been committed.

— See Chart 1 at beginning.

— For the record, Mason Library's 2005 fundraising total was \$682,988.00 which in today's dollars would be \$1,065,206.46. We can do it again.

10.) Community Input and Support: Describe any community input, meetings, and/or support that you have for your proposed project. Include support letters as applicable (they will not be counted towards the 4-page limit.) Letters should be unique and not reproduced form letters.

— See enclosed letters of endorsement, also our just completed MBLC approved Great Barrington Strategic Plan has show the needs and support of our community through public survey and forums.

11.) Permits: Describe permits that may be required, the status of those permits or applications, and/or when the applications will be submitted and permits received.
—No permits at this stage. Application for MBLC grant as per timeline.

Historic Preservation Projects

15.) Historic Preservation Projects: Clearly describe how the project meets the Historic Preservation goals of the Community Preservation Plan

The Ramsdell Library project is consistent with the strategies HC1.2 and HC 1.4 of the Great Barrington Community Master Plan 2013. Ramsdell Library was placed on the National Register Of Historic Places in 2014, in recognition of its historical importance to our local and state history. CPA funds will be used to leverage other public and private donations to protect and preserve this historic property.

The Community Preservation Plan 2023-2024 specifies it's highest priority to projects on Town-owned property. Under historic preservation goals, the Ramsdell Library renovation fulfills both roles of supporting our town as a sustainable community by reusing existing buildings and directs growth pressures to locations where infrastructure already exists. It helps to create jobs and increase property tax revenue and tourism. The library supports educational opportunities and resources for our citizens.

16.) Other Information: Describe any other relevant information about the project and the site.

The Board of Library Trustees have the fiduciary duty to guide this project successfully. If we do not get the MBLC Construction Grant, we will still use the CPA funding as leverage with funding from other sources. Fixing Ramsdell piecemeal is not an option. There are too many needs. If the cost of renovation exceed 30% of value of the building, the entire building has to come into compliance of current building codes.....G.L.c.22. & 13A.

*****Addendum: All reports mentioned in the application including the following:

- Great Barrington Libraries Strategic Plan 2025-2029
- Ramsdell Library Building Program June 2020
- Ramsdell Library Facilities Vision Report 2018
- Drummey Rosane Anderson Inc. May 30, 2010

—can be located at the Great Barrington Town Website under Library, left column on the site.

Certification

19.) This application was prepared, reviewed, and submitted by:

Name: Patrick Hollenbeck

Ph: 617-212-9840

Email: Patorch@msn.com

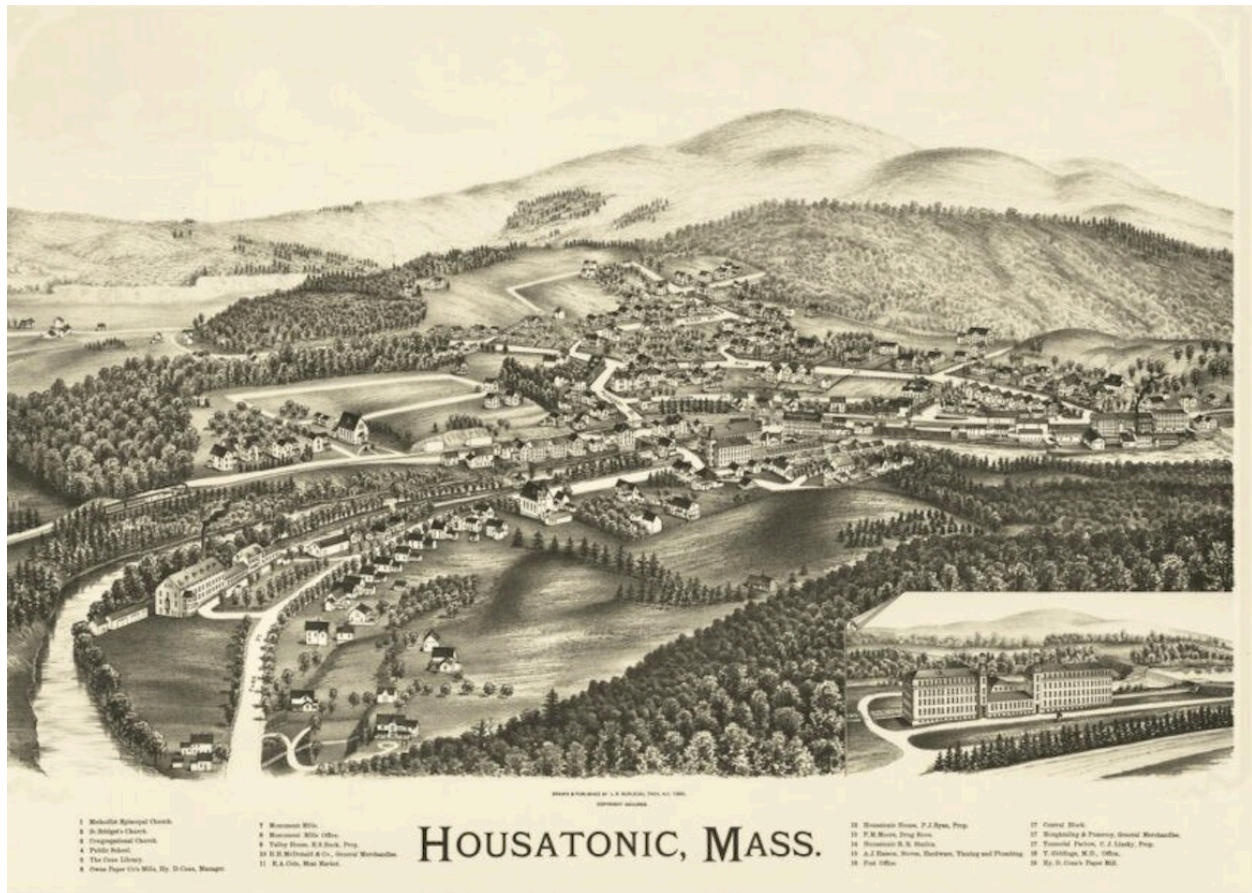
I hereby certify that all of the above and included information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature:

Date

11/30/23

Housatonic Village 1800's :



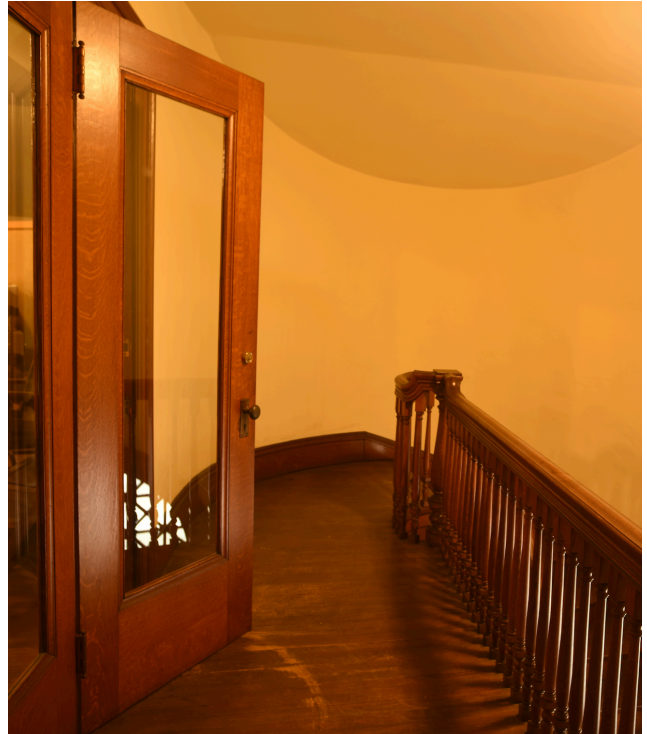
1930 addition showing separate piece without full foundation.

Foundation under book stacks with light showing through the floor boards in the 1930 addition in the back. Photo taken 11/26/23





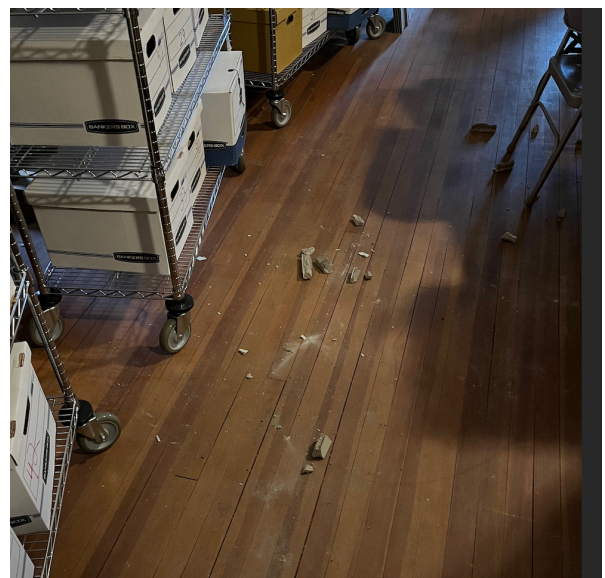
**Front door and Bathroom door—
cannot open bathroom door
without impinging on people
coming in.**



**Upstairs door cannot open fully
open -fire hazard**



Only public bathroom not handicap accessible



Second floor ceiling plaster falling onto the floor



Public bathroom not handicap accessible



Plaster falling from second floor



Dirt basement under book stacks with light shining through



Single pane window, leak air



Mold on floor boards, children's room

Great Barrington Historical Commission

c/o Selectmen's Office
Town Hall
334 Main Street
Great Barrington, MA 01230

November 28, 2023

Community Preservation Committee
Town of Great Barrington
Town Hall
334 Main Street
Great Barrington, MA 01230

To the Committee:

The Great Barrington Historical Commission endorses the Ramsdell Library's application for a Community Preservation Act grant of \$150,000 with certain conditions.

The Library is both an historic and architectural gem of Housatonic. Designed in the Classical Revival style, brought into being through the benefaction of a wealthy industrialist and built to fulfill an important role of contributing to the American education of the largely Polish immigrant population, the Ramsdell Library is a superb local expression of the American Renaissance. The Main Streetscape, with its array of building types and styles, reflects early 20th century Housatonic society. Built alongside rows of modest millworkers housing, an elegant mill office building, three churches and the imposing family homes of mill management, the Ramsdell Library brings civic grandeur to the mix.

The project, as sketched by the Library Trustees, would restore the building and remediate several important deficiencies that keep the Town from using the Library to its fullest extent. Ramsdell Library would continue to be an architectural centerpiece in the village and its future ensured. Without the project, the fate of Ramsdell Library is uncertain.

The Historical Commission endorses the project with two reservations.

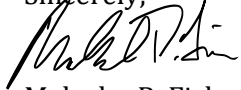
1. The success of the project depends on substantial investment by the Town, far beyond the \$150,000 currently requested. If the state grant is approved and accepted, the Town will be required to pay up to \$2 million for the capital project. Plus, the Town will be expected to pay, perhaps much more, annually than is currently spent on operations at Ramsdell. We feel that, given the staffing and funding issues currently faced by the library, the assumption by the Library Trustees that the Town will substantially increase its funding is far from certain and could jeopardize the project, further delaying the restoration of the building. We strongly suggest that a financial plan should be presented to the town. The plan should include any capital costs assumed by the Town if the grant is awarded, and ongoing annual costs that will be required to deliver increased services. This financial plan should be endorsed by the Selectboard and the Finance Committee before the grant application is submitted. If the Selectboard and Finance Committee are unwilling to endorse such a commitment, another, more realistic, plan should be created jointly by the Library Trustees,

the Selectboard and the Finance Committee.

2. The Historical Commission has been maintaining a sizable collection of the Town's historical archives at Ramsdell Library since 1977. Since that time, Historical Commission members have made multiple attempts to establish a permanent home at Ramsdell and to integrate the collection with the Library's mission. These attempts have all been rebuffed by the Library Trustees. The proposed project has no accommodation for the Town historical archives and the Historical Commission has been informed that it will not be able to return them to Ramsdell when the work is completed. Our preference is to remain at Ramsdell. Our endorsement of this project is conditional on the project being modified to include a very clear plan, agreeable to the Historical Commission, for the continued storage of the historical archives, whether at Ramsdell or an alternative location.

The Library Trustees have introduced a plan to reclaim Ramsdell's place as a center of education and cultural enrichment in the community. The Historical Commission endorses this plan, which can only be realized if the Town understands and commits itself financially and if the fate of the Town's historical archives is considered of equal importance to a meeting hall.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm R. Fick', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Malcolm R. Fick
Chairman

SHARON M. GREGORY
32 Hollenbeck Avenue
Great Barrington, MA 01230
917 929-4402 ** SharonGregor@gmail.com

Subject: Great Barrington Libraries-Ramsdell

To Whom It May Concern:

Recently our Great Barrington libraries have undergone numerous changes: management and staff turnover, a confusion of roles, and fewer library hours. Relatively new trustees are breathing new life into the organization. They need our support to meet the opportunities that will change the quality of our lives. It begins with the renovation of Ramsdell Library which will expand space and programs greatly for both libraries through the expansion of total space.

To do so, we need a building grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioner (MBLC) which is offered once in 8-10 years. A minimum grant prerequisite is a Town commitment of \$150,000, hopefully from the CPA. This certified commitment is but a fraction of what we could receive.

While it was named a major priority in Great Barrington's 2013 award-winning Master Plan, Ramsdell's renovation was left behind. As a concerned citizen and having served previously as the Chair of the GB Finance Committee, I am advocating why Ramsdell should be re-addressed:

TWO TOWNS IN ONE. In square miles, Great Barrington is the largest town in Berkshire County with our Housatonic hamlet at the northern tip. Yet, Housatonic is about the population size of Monterey or Egremont. Ramsdell Library is centrally located in its hamlet and walkable for its many families. Further, with Housatonic's median income 25% lower than GB centerⁱ, many do not have cars. We need both libraries.

SERVING THE UNDER-SERVED. Housatonic is underserved and its library is an example. The Beaux Arts building was a gift to the Town in 1908 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014. It has not been renovated in nearly a century. Architecturally attractive, its sumptuous second floor, once known as "the Great Hall" is now a massive storage space. The lower level would also be developed, in total, more than doubling the usable space. The building has no elevator and not ADA compliant. The temporary handicap ramp is not in keeping with the Library Building Program of June 2020.

Ramsdell represents the last public building in Housatonic available for formal community gatherings. The abandoned Housatonic School was left unaddressed for 20 years and was finally sold. Let's not let that happen to Ramsdell. The restricted deed calls for the building to be returned to the Ramsdell family should it cease being a library.

POPULATION CHANGES. Great Barrington's population changes in both composition and size have sparked urgency. Since 2000, the non-white population has increased 3.5 times over with the Hispanic population leading the way, quadrupling its residents. Housatonic CDP* houses 30% of this sector more than Great Barrington CDP. In terms of growth, Great Barrington's population is expected to increase in tandem with the largest expansion of group housing in South County. Between 2013 and 15 years

hence, an increase of 1,000 people will be residing in these new group housing units. This does not include residents in new single- and dual-family homes.

One way to meet GB's needs is to use our resources optimally. By renovating, modernizing and expanding its usable space and not its footprint, Ramsdell will not only serve more people, but also spur improvements at Mason Library. Special programs for pre-teens and teenagers could fill a void for this under-served group. Spanish language and tutoring facilities could also be accommodated in flexibly designed spaces. Both libraries will be more efficient, technologically updated and improved in space utilization.

KICK-OFF FUNDS. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) will meet to recommend the library's application for historic funds. To qualify for the building grant, the Town must certify a commitment of \$150,000. This will kick-off "the Planning and Design Phase" of Ramsdell for the multi-million-dollar grant.

WORK TO BE DONE. The 2020 Library Building Program has outlined the potential renovation, but many factors contributed to a standstill. Looking forward, a team, including the Library Board of Trustees will address Ramsdell's needs such as: an elevator, the build-out of its second and lower floor, modern technology including audio-visual facilities access to wireless internet, a redesign of its space, and basic infrastructure improvements (windows, insulation, lighting, etc.) Outreach committees will incorporate additional community input.

CAPITAL FUNDS NEEDED. Finally, a fundraising campaign will be launched to minimize the effect on the Town's capital budget. This can be done either through the expansion of the small Friends of the Library (a 501c3) group or through a separate new vehicle focused on capital projects.

With these improvements, both libraries will be centers of community-gatherings and program enlightenment, moving in tandem with our growing and changing population. I am asking that our Select Board, Town Manager, committees, and townspeople support our libraries with letters and participation in efforts to move this project forward.

Sincerely,



Sharon Gregory

November 17, 2023

¹ Housatonic and Great Barrington CDP (Census-Designated Place)



House of Representatives
State Representative Smitty Pignatelli
Fourth Berkshire District
State House, Room 166 Boston 02133-1053

November 29, 2023

Great Barrington Preservation Committee
Town Hall
Great Barrington, MA 01236

Dear Community Preservation Committee Members,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the comprehensive restoration of Ramsdell Library, a proposal currently under consideration for funding in your current grant cycle. The initiative, spearheaded by the Great Barrington Library Trustees, is a crucial step towards preserving this National Historic treasure and maintaining its status as a focal point of the Village of Housatonic.

Libraries hold a special place in our communities, and Ramsdell Library is no exception. Having observed the vital role vibrant libraries play throughout Western Massachusetts, I am convinced that supporting the restoration of Ramsdell is an investment in the heart and soul of your town. Moreover, emphasizing the importance of making Ramsdell Library fully ADA compliant is essential. In the Commonwealth, we are fortunate to have the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners overseeing our libraries. Their impressive track record of supporting library projects underscores the significance of initiatives like the Ramsdell Library restoration. While appropriations for new library grant rounds are infrequent, the urgent need for progress on the Ramsdell project should elevate its priority.

The Community Preservation Act presents an ideal opportunity to contribute to the success of this worthy project. I hope that your thoughtful consideration of this proposal will yield positive outcomes, not only for the residents of Housatonic and Great Barrington, but for the broader community as well.

Thank you for your time and dedication to preserving your community's legacy and enhancing its future through projects like the Ramsdell Library restoration. I look forward to the positive impact that the CPC support will bring to the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Smitty".

Smitty Pignatelli
State Representative
3RD Berkshire District
rep.smitty@mahouse.gov

GREAT BARRINGTON LIBRARIES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

November 19, 2023

Community Preservation Committee
Karen Smith, Chair
Town Hall
Great Barrington, MA 01230

Dear Committee Members,

The Library Trustees wish to express their strong support to use Community Preservation Act resources for the proposed Ramsdell Library Capital Renovation Project. This proposal meets the guidelines of the CPA plan, "that are consistent with the goals of other applicable town plans" such as the Master Plan. This proposal is consistent with these CPA Project Selection Considerations:

- Town projects - highest priority given to projects on town-owned property
- Public benefit - the project will support universal accessibility to Ramsdell Library
- Leveraging "use of multiple funding sources" - if we are successful in obtaining the state library construction grant, the state would add up to \$100,000 to our \$150,000 CPA request; a public fundraising campaign will also be implemented
- Community input and support - the GB Libraries 2024-2029 Strategic Plan included a public survey and dialogue with the community; further outreach meetings with the community and an additional survey are forthcoming, as the state library grant requires in Spring 2024
- Historic Preservation - Ramsdell Library is on the National Historic Register
- Project Team - in this initial phase our longterm consultants are ReThinking Libraries, Drummy Rosane Anderson (DRA) Architects (designed 2010 plans), Foresight Land Services, MBLC Consultants
- Viability of Applicant - a volunteer library building committee (consisting of professionals with relevant experience) will be formed in January 2024, following the same process as the state grant required in the 2007 Mason Library renovation

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration.

Best regards,



The Great Barrington Library Board of Trustees
Patrick Hollenbeck, President

Carol McGlinchey, Trustee
Town of Great Barrington Libraries

10 Beacon Hill, Housatonic, MA

November 29, 2023

Community Preservation Committee
Town of Great Barrington Town Hall
334 Main Street
Great Barrington, MA 01230

To the Committee:

This letter is to support Ramsdell Library's application for a Community Preservation Act grant of \$150,000. Although I am currently a Library Trustee, my endorsement is from my experience as a homeowner in the village of Housatonic for the past thirty years.

My daughter and I moved to Housatonic in 1993. I was a single parent and this was the only affordable area in Great Barrington where I could buy a home to raise my daughter. One of the greatest assets for her and for me was and still is the Ramsdell Library. With a limited single parent income, it was essential that I had access to free reading materials for my daughter and me. Prior to internet technology I was still able to request books from other libraries through the Ramsdell branch. This always seemed rather miraculous to me as buying books was not feasible.

Over the years our quiet, stately, and comfortable library has been a place of refuge for me and others. I also value reading the newspapers there for free! Now we have the Library of Things and so much more. Housatonic is thriving with new families with young children. It's such a joy to see parents reading to their young children in our delightful children's room.

Recently I posted photos of our new ADA ramp and steps at Ramsdell to the Facebook Housatonic Community Board. Many commented on how beautiful the project is and what a great job was done. Others stated how valuable Ramsdell was to them growing up: "Love this library. I spent a good portion of my childhood there." "My entire childhood was made better thanks to this library."

It is essential that we begin to restore this magnificent building, make it ADA compliant, and remediate issues that prevent the library from being used to its fullest extent. We owe it to the young families moving in as well as our aging seniors to restore and renovate the library to the quality facility that Mr. Ramsdell intended for our village community.

I am in agreement with all that is stated in the Great Barrington Historical Commission Letter of Endorsement. Therefore I won't review what is stated in that letter. My purpose is to impress upon your committee how essential it is to address the needs of this lower income community by providing a library for the future. I want other children to have the pleasure of walking to this village library and participating in all it has to offer as my daughter and I did many years ago and still do so today.

We are indebted to Mr. Ramsdell for valuing humble mill workers and immigrants of his day. Now our village continues to have newly arrived immigrants and essential workers, as well as residents who have lived here their entire lives, who deserve to have a community library we can be proud of.

Thank you for considering the Ramsdell Library's application for a Community Preservation Act grant.

With gratitude,



Carol McGlinchey



SOUTHERN BERKSHIRE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

November 29, 2023

Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall
Great Barrington, MA 01230

Dear CPC Committee Members,

On behalf of the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to offer our support for the CPA grant proposal submitted by the Great Barrington Library Trustees for the Ramsdell Library Capital Renovation Project. Ramsdell Library stands as a unique and invaluable asset, serving since 1908 as a vital hub for the village of Housatonic.

The impact of allocating resources to rejuvenate Ramsdell extends far beyond the library itself. A CPC investment in Ramsdell is, in essence, an investment in the future economic prosperity of Housatonic, sending a resounding message to potential investors that the community is vibrant, forward-thinking, and open for business.

The CPC's endorsement of the \$150,000 grant request would be a pivotal step in the right direction, sending a compelling message to the philanthropic community to encourage increased participation in subsequent fundraising efforts for Ramsdell Library.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Betsy Andrus
Executive Director

*Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, 40 Railroad Street, suite 2, Great Barrington, Ma. 01230
www.southernberkshirechamber.com, betsy@southernberkshirechamber.com*