

Meriden Library Building Project Frequently Asked Questions



proposed project sketch courtesy of GeoBarns

Remind me: Why are we talking about a new Meriden Library?

At Town Meeting 2017, a warrant article to defund the Meriden Library was voted down 225 to 29. With this show of overwhelming support for the Meriden Library, the latest iteration of the Meriden Library Building Committee was formed to make a recommendation for how to move forward.

Seeing as the existing Meriden Library is not ADA-compliant, the building committee was tasked with proposing a plan to make the Meriden Library a building **all** community members can access and enjoy. This is the second half of a two-phase project to bring both of our wonderful village libraries into the 21st century — a goal that originated in the 1990's. Hazardous materials, accessibility issues, and energy inefficiencies are all issues facing the current Meriden Library building. Our proposed building design is ADA-compliant, is in keeping with Plainfield's Ready For 100 energy goals, and **we plan to pay for it entirely with donations and existing funds.**

What are the overall tax implications for me, specifically, if this project is approved at Town Meeting?

The Library Trustees are putting forth a warrant article for **zero additional tax dollars** to be approved at the 2021 Town Meeting. This means we plan to raise the rest of the necessary funds independently to meet our \$1.15M budget. We currently have approximately \$1.12M toward this project in pledges and existing funds (as of January 19, 2021), and are well within reach of that goal. Thanks to the generosity of our friends and neighbors all around Plainfield, we will have an incredible gift — a town building and community hub that will last for generations!

Is this really the time for this type of project?

After COVID-19 hit, the Building Committee and Library Trustees voted unanimously to take this project off the table for the 2020 Town Meeting. We have used the intervening time to interview potential architects, look into additional design/build firms, and obtain an updated project cost estimate. This library represents an excellent value for the town, with low operating costs and accessibility for all residents, and we have a great deal of funding in hand now. We are in the process of putting together an incredible, experienced, and enthusiastic team of builders, engineers, and architects to bring this project to fruition. We feel it is important to give Plainfield taxpayers the opportunity to vote to move forward this year, with **no additional money required from taxation.**

Even in this strange year, we have heard from many people that our town's two libraries have been a vital resource and lifeline, providing a continued sense of community in an isolating time. Looking to the future, this library will be a gathering space for decades to come.

What work has been done on the project so far?

The current Meriden Library Building Committee was formed in 2017. In the intervening years, the group considered how best to make an ADA-compliant Meriden Library, assessed space and resource needs, sourced detailed design estimates from a variety of sources, created a building design and model, and worked with a design-build firm to come up with a realistic plan and budget. We have sourced two different cost estimates to confirm our budget. This budget includes all elements of building the new library, including demolition and abatement of the existing building, storage of materials, and construction and sitework for the new building. Simultaneously, the Meriden Library Foundation has raised a tremendous amount of money in pledges, donations, and through grants.

In 2020, we have worked hand-in-hand with the Library Trustees to gather updated information in a COVID-19 world, with the goal of presenting the best possible plan to the town in 2021. Our intent has always been to propose a building that we feel will best meet the needs of the town, and let the taxpayers vote on it.

This new building features a 30-person meeting room. Why do we need that?

In non-COVID times, the Meriden Library runs a number of popular programs for all ages, from after-school early release programs to Humanities Council events with guest speakers, plus book clubs, poetry evenings, puppet shows, storytimes, and more. This meeting room would allow the library to grow its roster of programs and have a permanent home for existing popular events, as well as to showcase local art now that the Duckworth Museum is no longer open. The Meriden Library also hosts a great deal of meetings and small community gatherings, from the Energy Committee to game times and knitting groups, and having a suitable, handicap-accessible space to do so is of utmost importance. This meeting room will also be accessible from a separate entryway, so it can be utilized outside of normal library operating hours.

I've been hearing a lot about this being a Ready For 100, energy-efficient building. What will the annual energy costs of the new building be? How do they compare to costs of the current building?

This is essentially the same building we proposed in 2018 as a Ready for 100 building, with a slightly different look; the only thing that has changed dramatically is the financing, as the Meriden Library Foundation has raised significant funds over the last two years. This new Meriden Library will cost significantly less on a square foot basis than the existing building. It will have approximately the same operating costs of about \$8,000/year as the current building for a larger space. If approved, this would be poised to be the first town-owned Ready For 100 building in Plainfield.

In summary, the Meriden Library Building Committee was formed to look at the challenges presented by the existing library, and to make a recommendation to the town for how best to address those limitations. Building upon the work of previous study committees' efforts and conclusions, we have met regularly over the last 3½ years, investing a great deal of thought, research, and discussion into our proposal. The new library will eliminate the liabilities associated with the existing building, improve functionality, and minimize costs going forward. It will be a beautiful building that will serve the community safely and efficiently for decades to come.

The Meriden Library Building Committee:

Leeli Bonney, Terri Crane, Joe Crate, Shannon Decker, Bill Knight, Shawn Rogers, Suzanne Spencer, Library Trustee Liaison Jennifer Lenz

Advisors: Mary King, Brad Atwater, Steve Halleran

What will the new Meriden Library be like?

The Meriden Library Building Committee has been working hard since 2017 to create plans for a new facility that will meet the established needs of the town in a modern building while preserving the warmth and charm that we love in our existing building. Since this is a public project, we have given significant attention to ensure that the building and grounds are designed to be accessible, durable, easy to maintain, and exceptionally energy-efficient (using environmentally sustainable materials and methods), to maximize the value to taxpayers over the long term.

Here are some highlights of the new Meriden Library building:

- The new building will be on the site of the current library. It will be single-story, positioned on a slight rise above street level, with walkways leading to entries at grade level.
- The scale of the new building is appropriate for a public building in a rural New England village, with slightly larger surfaces and volumes than a house, but not overpowering to the neighborhood.
- A new meeting room will see regular use for library-sponsored activities. It is also designed so that it can be used for activities outside of library hours.
- The library building itself will provide a welcoming, comfortable experience for patrons. It will be well-lit using natural and (controlled) mechanical light. It will be heated, cooled, and ventilated with equipment that is extremely energy efficient and more easily and cheaply maintained, using heat pumps and energy-recovery ventilators.
- The new building will include familiar materials and colors for siding, roofing, and interior finishes that will be selected for their aesthetics, durability, and ease of maintenance.
- The new building is sized to accommodate all of the existing functions of the current library and incorporates the necessary features to make the building safe, accessible to all, and compliant with all applicable building codes.
- The building includes spaces tailored to the needs of children, teens, and adults, and takes advantage of the beautiful outdoor area, as well.
- The entry lobby includes bathrooms and a kitchenette that allow for independent use without disturbing functions in either the library proper or the meeting room.
- Parking will be expanded to provide 18 parking spaces along the western side of the building, including ADA compliant parking spaces.
- To improve safety for pedestrians and vehicles, curbing and sidewalks will separate cars and people, and new sidewalks will lead from the street and parking areas to the main entrance.
- Energy-efficient exterior lighting will allow drivers and pedestrians to safely navigate parking areas and walkways.

Information provided by the Meriden Library Committee: Shannon Decker, Chair, Cypeli Bonney, Terri Crane, Joe Crate, Bill Knight, Shawn Rogers, Suzanne Spencer, Library Trustee Liaison Jennifer Lenz

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