

Future of George H. Stowell Free Library Subcommittee Report 08/03/2021

Some history:

- The Honorable George H. Stowell, who had lived in Cornish as a boy, offered in 1909 to build and furnish a library for the town. His offer was presented for a vote by the Town in the *Annual Reports of the Selectmen and Other Town Officers of the Town of Cornish, N.H. for the year ending February 15th, 1910*. (Article #12, pg. 4)
- The handwritten record for that vote states, "On the motion of Joseph H. Pierce voted that the town accept the offer of the Hon. Geo. H. Stowell to build the library building and furnish it at his own expense - that the town raise and appropriate the sum of \$150 to buy a lot and use such part of the sum as may be necessary."
- Mr. Stowell agreed to donate up to \$5,000 for the construction and up to \$1,000 for the furnishings.
- The Town bought a 70' by 75' lot along School Street from E. B. Hunt as noted in Book 176, Page 44 recorded at the Sullivan County Registry of Deeds on September 7, 1910.
- Construction began in early spring of 1910 and was nearly completed by the end of that year.

Disadvantages of the current building:

- There are only 1,226 square feet of space on the main floor of the building:
 - Access to the cellar space and composting toilet is via a set of steep, narrow stairs.
- There is no handicap access.
- There is no running water.
- The only bathroom is a composting toilet.
- Parking is problematic:
 - Historical Society patrons and ballet class parents compete for parking along the south side of School Street.
 - If patrons park legally (right side tires on the asphalt) on the north side of School Street while patrons are parked in front of the library, there is not enough road left for emergency vehicles.
- There is no space for a designated meeting room.
- There is very limited space for library programs.
- Lack of bathroom facilities make programming difficult.
- Space for expansion of the building is limited to the space between the library and the Historical Society.

Average monthly utility/heating costs over the last eleven years:

Electric -	\$37.50/monthly (with humidifier in the summer)
Telephone -	\$34.60/month
Heating -	\$161.96/month
Maintenance -	\$35.74/month

Uses for the building if the library moves to the former Cornish General Store:

- It could function as an annex to the library with tables, chairs, and space for research and reference materials and as a home for the Cornish Historical Society giving them space to house their entire collection.

What has been accomplished so far:

- The library trustees held a forum in 2018. The votes from the people that attended were tabulated with the following suggestions having the highest priorities:
 - Create an accessible entrance,
 - Build addition to join library and historical society buildings to include research space, restrooms, book shelves,
 - Increase the library budget
 - Automate the library systems
 - Increase afternoon hours one day/week.
- Progress on the Forum priorities to date:
 - Design plans for an accessible entrance, restrooms, and meeting space have been completed.
 - The septic and well design has been completed.
 - The extra land needed for a well and septic has been annexed but the purchase by the Town will need to be approved at March, 2022 Town Meeting. (Money has been donated to pay the purchase cost.)
 - The budget has been increased.
 - The library systems have been automated.
 - Library hours were increased on Wednesdays and Saturdays for a total (until COVID) of 10 hours per week.
 - The trustees researched New Hampshire libraries in towns with similar populations. Cornish spent the LOWEST per capita amount in 2019 for its library - \$13.66.