

2 Lawmar Lane Burnt Hills, New York 12027

---

**May 3, 2022**

**Library and Town Reach Agreement on Key Issues  
An Update from the Library Board of Trustees**

On Monday May 2, Library Trustee President Steve Zarelli and Trustee Tom Shaginaw had a productive meeting with Town of Ballston Supervisor Eric Connolly and Councilman Michael Carota. Good progress was made in resolving outstanding issues between the Town and the Library.

The Town released the Library's tax levy to the Library, and both parties have reached an agreement regarding the path forward on the NY State Construction Grant. The Library respects the Town's desire for an Owner's Representative on the project, and will support a solution that provides the Town with the assurances it has requested. The construction project has been postponed to allow for summer programming, however it is anticipated that work will begin late summer/early fall.

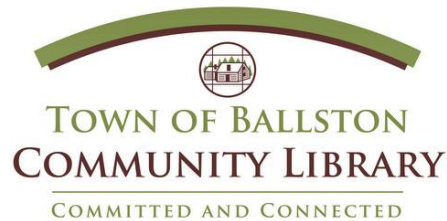
"This is a positive step forward; the Town heard us and we heard them," said Library Board of Trustees President Steve Zarelli. "This is a fresh start, and going forward we both are committed to better communication and collaboration, which can only benefit the people we serve."

A few matters remain outstanding, particularly the Library's Reserve Fund Balance and the Library Charter Update. The Library and Town will jointly seek guidance from the Office of the State Comptroller on the appropriate management of the Fund Balance. Also, the Library and the Town will revisit the Charter Update, and if agreed, propose legislation for the 2023 Legislative Session.

As always, we appreciate your support and welcome feedback.

*The Town of Ballston Community Library Board of Trustees*

*Steve Zarelli, President  
Michelle Hernandez, Vice President  
Stephen Burchett, Treasurer  
Sue Tomlinson, Secretary  
Tom Shaginaw  
Carolyn Speenburgh  
Julia Stone*



April 25, 2022

**Tell your Town of Ballston elected officials to support the library!**

Contact Ballston [Town Supervisor Eric Connolly](#) (518-490-2780) and your Ballston elected officials and tell them to stop playing political games with the library! Tell them to:

1. Release the library's full tax levy and fund balance to the library! It's almost May and the Town still has not given the library its money.
2. Stop blocking the library's efforts to update its charter. The planned library charter updates increase transparency and accountability for you – the taxpayers!
3. Stop the stonewalling and delay tactics on the library construction project, which will mostly be paid for with a \$107,000 NYS Grant the library was awarded. This includes a new meeting room and updated LED lighting – something to benefit the whole community.

**Why is this happening?**

In early 2020, then new Supervisor Connolly, began making unprecedented requests of the library that included altering hours of operation and hiring decisions. Additionally, the Town conducted a secret "HR investigation" of some library employees without informing the Library Trustees.

The Supervisor and Town Attorney claimed that the Library Trustees did not have the accountability or authority to provide financial oversight to the library because "they were appointed, not elected" – the same things the "appointed" Library Trustees had been doing successfully the previous 63 years.

The Library Trustees consulted with their library system, the State's Division of Library Development, and a library attorney to conclude the Town's actions were not only unprecedented, but not supported by law, regulation, or commentary from the state's Attorney General and Comptroller.

***When the Library declined the inappropriate demands, an ongoing pattern of retaliation began.***

- The Supervisor refused to include the library's motions in Town meetings.
- The Town refused to recognize and properly pay the new Library Director.
- The Town refused to process the invoices for the library's attorney.
- The Town refused to process invoices for the cleaning service the library retained during the pandemic.
- While at first agreeing to cooperate with the library in updating its charter to help increase transparency and accountability, Town officials suddenly and inexplicably changed their mind and sabotaged efforts with State Legislators to update our charter.
- The Library was awarded a \$107,000 NYS Grant for constructing a "Local History Room" and updating LED lighting. When informed of the library's action in retaining a construction firm in November 2021, Town Officials had no objection. Then, months after they were initially informed, they suddenly claimed the library did not have the authority to do this. Now the Town is proposing to hire a second engineering firm for \$20,000 to oversee the library's engineering firm and contractor -- and the Town wants to take the \$20,000 from the library's funds. This is an unnecessary waste of taxpayer money. Due to the Town's stalling and refusal to cooperate, we have had to postpone the project and we may end up losing the grant. **This is a \$107,000 grant to benefit the taxpayers of Ballston, and the Town administration is putting it at risk by playing political games.**

**What are the facts?**

The library is a separate legal entity from the Town, supported by its own taxing district (which you see as a separate line item on your tax bill, if you live outside the Village). It is not a department of the town and library employees are not town employees. The library is chartered by the NYS Department of Education and, per Library Law, **the Library Board of Trustees has sole responsibility for overseeing operations including hiring, personnel, budgeting, procurement, and financial oversight.** This is how the library has operated since it was chartered in 1957. By law, the library should not have to ask for the Town's "permission" to access the library's funds.

Your Library Board of Trustees operates in compliance with the law, is fully transparent and is a non-partisan body. We have successfully partnered with Town administrations of both parties up until 2020.

None of the Town's actions or decisions have been part of public discussion or debate. This has all been done behind closed doors. Does the full Town Board support the actions directed at the library? We, the Library Trustees, have no idea because none of it has been transparent.

## **How you can help the library**

Contact the Town of Ballston officials and demand they release the library's tax levy and reserve fund, support the library charter update and approve the contract for the \$107,000 construction grant.

- **Eric Connolly, Town Supervisor**
  - 518-490-2780 / [Email Eric Connolly](#)
- **Michael Carota, Town Board Member**
  - 518-723-0164 / [Email Michael Carota](#)
- **Chuck Curtiss, Town Board Member**
  - 518-526-6286 / [Email Chuck Curtiss](#)
- **Rob Fendrick, Town Board Member**
  - 518-858-1289 / [Email Rob Fendrick](#)
- **Kelly Jasinski, Town Board Member**
  - 518-573-5431 / [Email Kelly Jasinski](#)

As always, we appreciate your support and welcome feedback.

*The Town of Ballston Community Library Board of Trustees*

*Steve Zarelli, President*

*Michelle Hernandez, Vice President*

*Stephen Burchett, Treasurer*

*Sue Tomlinson, Secretary*

*Tom Shaginaw*

*Carolyn Speenburgh*

*Julia Stone*

*More information*

*We tried to keep this summary simple, but it is a lot to digest. For more details including meeting minutes and videos of Library Board of Trustee meetings, please [visit the library website](#).*