

## **Avon Library Board Announces Capital Campaign For Library Expansion**

Press Release:

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The Board of Directors of the Avon Free Public Library has announced the appointment of a capital campaign committee to raise funds for the library's expansion and renovation. The initial phase of the construction is tentatively scheduled to commence in several months and should be completed in 12 – 14 months. This project was approved by Avon voters in an October 2009 referendum, and the Avon Town Council has recently authorized the completion of construction documents and the hiring of a construction manager to oversee the project in conjunction with a library building committee.

“The Library Board advised town authorities of the need for a larger, reconfigured library more than ten years ago. We have been actively planning for the renovation and expansion of the building for several years,” said Mary LaBelle Suter, President of the Board of Directors. Due to the priority of other capital projects in town, the library project was postponed, and the economic recession of 2008 caused yet another delay. This year, however, is an opportune time to begin construction. “The library is expected to realize savings of at least ten percent of the original project estimate, because construction costs are significantly lower now for both materials and labor,” Suter reported.

The Library Board has also committed to fundraising to contribute to the estimated \$8 – 9 million project budget. According to Suter, this is a common practice for boards of municipal libraries, not just in Connecticut but throughout the country. “We have learned a lot about what other libraries have accomplished with fundraising, as well as how they approached the campaign and how they achieved

their goal. The most important component of success is having the right campaign leadership and a clearly articulated vision for how the campaign contributions will be used to augment the traditional building costs provided by the town,” explained Suter. “When the Library Board began to talk about who should lead the fundraising campaign, we identified a number of characteristics of the ideal campaign chair. He or she should be well-known and well-respected in town. This individual should understand the value and the role of a first rate municipal library, and he or she should be able to articulate the importance of community participation in a library improvement project. We also wanted someone with proven management and leadership skills, and someone who could recruit the right people to accept key assignments on the fundraising committee. We identified Mark Nolan, recently retired Principal of Pine Grove School, as someone who fit all of our criteria. When we approached Mark about chairing the capital campaign, he readily accepted.”

“This is an exciting and challenging opportunity for me to play a different role in the Avon community,” said Nolan. “I believe passionately in the importance of renovating and expanding our library. The role of public libraries is changing and evolving, and the programs and services that they provide are growing and branching out. A library is no longer simply a warehouse for books.... it also serves as a community center, a public gathering place, and a resource for technology, research, literacy, culture and the arts. This is the vision that is driving our campaign,” said Nolan.

As Campaign Chair, Nolan has recruited an impressive group of talented individuals to lead each of the subcommittees of the campaign organization. Don McDonald and Jeffrey Baldwin are heading the individual solicitations unit, responsible for both leadership level gifts and the community campaign. John Carmon heads the business solicitations unit, and Dick Kisiel coordinates

the campaign efforts with service and community organizations, as well as with the schools. Magda Stayton is responsible for seeking grants through foundations and charitable trusts, and Lisa House and Lou DiBacco have designed all campaign materials and informational pieces. Nancy Muench serves as treasurer of the Avon Library Expansion Fund. Also supporting Mark Nolan are Elaine Wilson and Carin Salonia, who are responsible for campaign events, public relations, donor software management, and administrative support to the Steering Committee. “In addition to this capable team, I am delighted that Nancy and Jeffrey Hoffman have agreed to serve as Honorary Chairs of the campaign,” said Nolan. “The Hoffman name is synonymous with successful businesses, community involvement and a long tradition of generous philanthropy. Nancy and Jeff will bring their proven leadership skills, their visibility, and their tangible community spirit to our fundraising efforts. We are very fortunate to have their involvement.”

Library Director Virginia Vocelli said that the library had applied for and received approval of a \$1,000,000 construction grant funded by the Connecticut State Library Board. She explained that the state Bonding Commission must authorize final approval of the grant but has not yet done so, due to the state’s fiscal crisis. “We remain hopeful that the grant will be approved, but it is always a possibility that the state will withdraw its commitment,” said Vocelli. She added that town officials are doing everything possible to secure final approval of the grant. In March, Town Manager Brandon Robertson, Town Council Chair Mark Zacchio, and Board President Suter met at the State Capitol with members of the Governor’s staff and the Office of Policy and Management to discuss the grant’s status. State Senator Kevin Witkos and State Representative Tim LeGeyt also attended the meeting. They remain in frequent contact with government officials as deliberations move forward at the state-level.

Library Board President Suter said that the Board of Directors had committed to providing at least \$500,000 to help finance the project through the capital campaign. These contributions will be allocated to interior design features, including lighting, furniture, shelving, and technology upgrades, as well as to hands-on educational features, such as a miniature Avon village in the children's room.

Campaign Chair Nolan reported that campaign planning has been underway for several months, explaining that the committee is following traditional fundraising protocol by beginning the campaign with a quiet phase, seeking grants and leadership gifts. The committee has already made significant progress towards the fundraising goal. The campaign that reaches out to the broader community will be launched in several months and will seek the participation of people throughout Avon. This phase of the campaign will include a number of special events that will raise awareness of the importance of the library project to the entire town. "Of course, we welcome pledges and donations to the campaign at any time," said Nolan. Please contact Mark Nolan at 860.673.3200 or any member of the Steering Committee, if you wish to discuss a contribution.