

Public Hearing – Conveyance of EHFPL  
Municipal Office Complex  
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2  
September 4, 2019  
Public Hearing Minutes

Selectmen Present: E. Lyman; S. Link; R. Smith

Also Present: D. Barlow; P. Barlow; D. Berndtson; J. Bielot; A. Blaschik; E. Blaschik; C. Brownell; M. Callahan; J. Cozean; C. Cubeta; J. Dill; R. Dill; E. Dillon; A. Donner; D. Faipier; B. Gillis; M. Gillis; M. Gilroy; T. Gionta; A. Kiley; B. Kiley; B. Lunt; J. Maynard; D. McGlinchey; K. McRae; H. Monterose; C. Nelan; B. Pear; L. Pear; B. Perry; C. Quinn; V. Riley-Pach; I. Schwartz; D. Shorthouse; R. Turner; C. VanValkenburg; P. Veselak; J. Zaid; L. Zemienieski and other members of the public

First Selectman Lyman opened the Public Hearing at 7:15 p.m. and stated that the main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Library Board's proposal to transfer ownership of the East Haddam Free Public Library (EHFPL) building to the Town. He briefly reviewed the history of the Town's public libraries, their endowments and the Town's contributions to their upkeep.

Mr. Lyman noted that, in 2013, ownership of the Rathbun Library building was transferred to the Town and a unified public library system was established. He stated that ownership of the EHFPL building was never transferred to the Town, even though the Assessor's records indicated that it had been. He added that the error in the records possibly occurred in the 1950's. Mr. Lyman advised that the intention had always been that the Reading Room Association would transfer ownership of the EHFPL library building, property and endowments to the Town and a stipulated judgement from the Superior Court has given the Reading Room Association permission to offer the EHFPL building and property to the Town as a gift.

Mr. Lyman reviewed the next steps needed, following the Public Hearing, to decide whether or not to accept the gift of the EHFPL. He distributed materials outlining the finances related to the libraries and reviewed the costs of needed upgrades to the buildings. Mr. Lyman reported that the 2017 appraisal for the EHFPL is \$517,900.00.

The following public comments were discussed.

- In response to questions raised by Mr. B. Gillis, Mr. Lyman advised that the annual contributions to the Town's general fund from the Rathbun endowment is approximately \$40k and from the EHFPL endowment is approximately \$14k. Mr. Lyman confirmed the "library system" must be maintained in perpetuity but not necessarily the two buildings. He noted that a special dispensation from the Attorney General would be required for the Town to replace the existing structures with a new library building and to sell the present buildings.
- In response to a comment raised by Mr. H. Monterose, Mr. Lyman confirmed that the Rathbun Library does have an elevator; however, it is not fully adequate for ADA compliance since it only allows access to the main floor. Mr. Gilroy confirmed that there are bathrooms on each floor of the Rathbun Library but only the bathroom on the main floor is ADA compliant.
- Ms. J. Dill noted that she believes that conveyance of the Rathbun Library was done via a trust which may restrict selling the building. She stated that she wanted to go on record that she feels that the trust should not be broken and that the Rathbun is a beautiful building and a treasure to the Town which should do everything it can to keep it as a library for future generations.

- Ms. J. Maynard, President of the East Haddam Free Public Library and Reading Room Association, reviewed the history of the library and stated that while the EHFPL trust retained ownership of the building, the books and contents of the library were given to the Town. She also reviewed the history of the establishment of the unified single public library system and the process involved in gifting the ownership of the building and property to the Town. Ms. J. Maynard spoke about the EHFPL's finances, fund-raising efforts and its financial contributions to the Town.

There being no additional comments from the public, Mr. Lyman closed the Public Hearing at 7:49 p.m.

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,  
Emmett J. Lyman, First Selectman