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Guilford Free Library Expansion Timeline

as of February 23, 2022

To give a sense of the progression of this project, the Guilford Free Library Trustees have put together this timeline of discussions and actions related to the potential expansion library. This list is not exhaustive – updates about the project were also discussed at nearly every trustee meeting since 2018, as well as a number of Selectboard meetings. These are highlights of decisions, actions, and public outreach & information sessions. More information about the library expansion project, including architectural plans and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), can be found on the library and town websites:

- <https://www.guilfordfreelibraryvt.org/survey>
- <https://guilfordvt.com/>

2011-2016

June 2016: Library trustees reviewed and revised the library's Strategic Plan, adopted in 2011 and last revised in 2014, which was informed by the work of a twelve-member planning committee made up of two library trustees, a library staff person, a Selectboard member, a Planning Commission member, a representative of Windham County Reads, a Senior Lunch participant, a computer consultant, a former school librarian, and three parents of children ranging from pre-school to high school ages. Part of the planning committee's findings included: "Residents believe the Library needs more space, and they envision the space being used for programs, holding meetings, teaching, and expanded services." The Strategic Plan's objectives from 2012 included: "The Library will explore small meeting spaces in the community that can accommodate up to 20 people. The ideal space will be inexpensive, heated, physically accessible, contain a bathroom and be readily available. The Library will request other organizations like the Grange to participate in the search. The Library will also investigate the land that adjoins the current library footprint in regard to the possibility of expanding."

2017

July: Library trustees again reviewed and revised the library's Strategic Plan, last revised in 2016 (see above). New plan included the goal: "Increase physical space."

October: Library trustees discussed improvements/renovations needed inside the library, including: replacement of aging furnace, replacement of old carpet in front room, incorporating a kitchenette/pantry so that the library staff would no longer have to use the bathroom as a kitchen (with the refrigerator in the basement), and adding a comfortable reading chair to the children's room.

2018

March:

- Library trustees put surveys on every seat, and distributed them to residents on their way in or out of Town Meeting. Surveys were also available at the library. Survey questions included: Which library resources do you most appreciate? Which library resources do you most desire? If you do not use the library, why not?
- Library trustees decided against adding a comfortable reading chair to the children's room due to lack of space.

April: Library trustees began discussing the possibility of an addition to address long voiced desire from residents for more space, which was found again in our most recent survey, as well as incorporate the Capital Needs Assessment renovations. These discussions remained on the trustee meeting agendas throughout the year.

August: Held off on scheduling furnace replacement until addition question is settled.

September: Library trustees' renovation vision: ADA compliance, quiet reading room with door, meeting room, work stations, room for adult collections, dedicated children's room, VT history collection, librarian's office, storage, kitchenette, bathroom(s), cloak/mud room, parking & lighting, outdoor covered area & landscaping, basement usability, energy efficiency, connectivity with village center.

November: Library trustees formed subcommittee to explore next steps toward a potential addition.

December: Library trustee chair Laura Lawson Tucker and librarian Cathi Wilken presented the potential addition idea to the Selectboard.

2019

January: Selectboard voted to support the library's expansion study and grant application.

February: Library trustee chair Laura Lawson Tucker and librarian Cathi Wilken presented the potential addition idea to the Planning Commission. Planning Commission voted to support the library expansion process.

March: Hired Isaac Wagner of Wagner Development Partners to apply for Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) planning grant. If awarded, the grant will fund a feasibility study of a potential addition to the library. Isaac will manage the feasibility study and complete the grant.

April:

- Applied for VCDP planning grant.
- Copies of grant application available to residents at Town Office. Public hearing at Town Office on April 8th.
- Received letters of support for the library expansion project and grant application from the following: John Gagnon, Guilford Central School Principal; Angela Saviano, Guilford Central School Teacher Librarian; Guilford Recreation Commission; The Friends of Algiers Village, Inc.; Community Collaborative for Guilford (CC4G); The Guilford Homeschool Group; Becca Balint, State Senator.

July: Notified that we received the VCDP grant.

August: Began feasibility study. Study to include a narrative scope of the project, archaeological survey, Historic Preservation review, environmental impact review, engineering review of well & septic options, rough-draft architectural plans, and cost estimation to determine whether an addition is possible and what complicating factors exist that would need to be planned for.

2020

February: Announced expansion study in Town Report.

July: Draft feasibility narrative report completed with architectural review.

August: Architect's conceptual plan complete. Draft feasibility report presented to trustees. Other components pending, with delays due to pandemic restrictions and disrupted scheduling.

September: Historic Preservation preliminary review complete. Engineering assessment complete.

December: Archaeological resource assessment complete.

2021

April: Archaeological field study complete.

May:

- Proforma budget complete and feasibility study finalized; found that an addition to the library is feasible. The location of the addition is primarily dictated by the well and septic placement, as well as historic preservation of the existing building's appearance. The significant slope of the land necessitates a two-story structure to connect with current library floor level.
- Selectboard put out RFP for architects to develop a more complete plan and see the project through to completion.

June: Three out of the five bidding architects were interviewed. Goldstone Architects were selected unanimously by interviewing committee for a number of reasons, including their presentation, proposal, critical questions, communication style, and demonstrated success in previous projects. Out of the five bids received, Goldstone's was the lowest.

August: Article in Guilford Gazette by Richard Wizansky.

September: Historical Society offered Guilford Center Meeting House to the town to renovate for use as library.

November:

- Article in Guilford Gazette by Lynn Green.
- 11/17: Architect's design 30% complete.

December:

- 12/13: Public meeting to discuss findings and close out the VCDP feasibility grant.
- 12/13: Selectboard meeting discussion of Meeting House offer. After review and site visits, the town Finance Advisory Committee and consulting architects both recommended against the town taking on the meeting house for use as a library. The main concerns were the extensive renovations needed, some of which would require liens to use neighboring property. The water and septic required, lack of parking, and adding a rear egress were especially problematic. Selectboard voted to decline the offer from Historical Society.
- 12/20: Article in The Commons: "Guilford Center meeting house deemed too costly a gift"
- 12/27: Selectboard meeting discussion with Finance Advisory Committee and public of library expansion. FAC recommended against library expansion and instead called for new building to be built in partnership with town non-profits.

2022

January:

- Library staff posted about the expansion online on Front Porch Forum and physically at the library and Guilford Country Store, with a survey for public input. Friends of the Library posted the same to Facebook.
- 1/10: Finance Advisory Committee reversed their opinion after seeing the design concepts and more complete financing plan. They now support the expansion project as a good value for the amount of taxpayer funding requested. Selectboard proposed reallocating \$195,000 left over from a 2011 Algiers water project to the library expansion, will warn a town meeting vote to authorize reallocation, along with a town meeting vote to authorize borrowing (not to exceed) \$205,000 from USDA. This loan would be contingent on the library project securing other funding.
- 1/20: Architect's design 60% complete.

February:

- Article in Guilford Gazette by Cathi Wilken.
- 2/1: Article in Brattleboro Reformer: "Guilford Library expansion presentation set for Wednesday"
- 2/2: Public meeting about library expansion with architect team and plans.
- 2/9: Article in The Commons: "Guilford to consider \$1.2 million library expansion: Separate activity center for kids planned with access to outdoors; voters to address the issue at Town Meeting in March"
- 2/10: Posted FAQ sheet and architect's proposed plans-in-progress on the library and town websites. Posted link to Front Porch Forum and Facebook.
- 2/17: Updated FAQ sheet with answers to newer questions.

Future (best guess at this point):

2022

- February 24: Pre town meeting to discuss articles on the ballot, including the library project.
- March 1: Town Meeting vote on library expansion project, including voting to reallocate the \$195,000 and borrow \$205,000 (as mentioned above in January 2022).
- August 1: Architect's design 90% complete.
- October 1: Architect's design 100% complete. Construction documents complete. Permitting completed.
- Fundraising campaign to occur throughout 2022. Beyond funds already in hand, the fundraising sources are to include: reallocation of \$195,000 bond and borrowing of \$205,000, both to be voted on by the town on March 1st; grants and tax credits (some already in hand); and local fundraising by the Friends of the Guilford Free Library. A breakdown of these sources is provided in the FAQ sheet on the town and library websites. The project will not move forward without funding secured.

2023

- January: Put project out to bid. Complete contract documents.
- March: Construction begins.