

Castleton Public Library Subcommittee Report on
Schodack Central School District's Proposal for a Dual-Use Library
January 19, 2014

On Wednesday, January 8, representatives of the Castleton Public Library (CPL) met with Schodack Central School District officials to discuss the district's proposal to create a dual-use library within the school's existing middle school library facility. The district's purpose is to maximize the efficient use of its space at the middle school while providing a practical benefit to the community.

To this end, the district has requested that CPL participate in a feasibility study to explore this proposal. The feasibility study would be conducted by the school district's engineering and planning firm, The Laberge Group, at an approximate cost of \$45,000. The school district requested that representatives of CPL participate in a steering committee which would complete its work by the end of May, in time for summer grant application deadlines. Participation in the feasibility study would also require a nominal contribution to the cost of the study by CPL, although an amount has not been fixed. The district's goal is to obtain up to \$600,000 in funds from the State of New York.

Upon careful consideration of the district's proposal, the CPL board subcommittee assigned to study this proposal respectfully recommends not participating in the feasibility study at this time. We have considered at length the school district's offer and have concluded that it does not meet our obligation to assess all sustainable options for the financial stability, growth and health of the library. The committee arrived at this conclusion based on the following:

- A dual-use model as proposed would require the library to provide services beyond its existing chartered service area. It would necessitate dissolution of the current CPL district and creation of a new library district.
- While re-districting and establishing a new charter may be a worthy consideration for the good of the library and the public, the necessary long-range planning and study that the idea deserves precludes CPL from accepting the district's immediate proposal.
- The school district is understandably pursuing its goal by means of an ambitious timeline. CPL is in the midst of pursuing its own goals, including the establishment of a strategic plan. Until this is accomplished, it would be remiss of our board to engage in any collaboration that would result in long-term commitments that may or may not be in keeping with the resultant strategic plan.
- All future planning by CPL must and should be library-centered, with the primary goal of establishing financial sustainability for the organization. It is this subcommittee's respectful opinion that collaborating with the district on this proposed feasibility study would limit the scope of options and leave other potential opportunities unexplored.
- The feasibility study conflicts with CPL's ongoing collaborations with neighboring libraries to provide more efficient services to the Village of Castleton and the entire Town of Schodack. These collaborations also strengthen our working relationship with CPL's prime funding agent, the Town of Schodack. It is the subcommittee's respectful opinion that participation in the school district's proposal at this time would re-focus our commitment of time, staff, and resources away from these relationships to the detriment of CPL's long-range goals.

In summary, a dual-use library with the school district, while a generous and innovative idea, does not best serve the current and long-range needs of CPL. This subcommittee respectfully recommends declining participation in the district's feasibility study. Further, we recommend the CPL Board of Directors continue to pursue efforts to determine the best path to sustained funding. How can CPL ensure sustained funding and long-term growth? Is re-districting a viable option? If so, what models and options should be considered? How can we independently assess the needs of CPL's service area in collaboration with The Town of Schodack, the Village of Castleton, and our other stakeholders? It is this committee's intention to invite serious discussion on these issues as we move forward.

The subcommittee extends its sincere gratitude to the Schodack Central School District for its proposal and our wishes for its successful future.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Karis-Nixon, Board Trustee
Doreen Truesdell, Board Trustee
Amy Peker, Director