

Highgate Public Library Awarded \$ 15,000 State Planning Grant

For Immediate Release

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Highgate, VT– The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) awarded \$15,000 to Highgate in state Municipal Planning Grant funds to the Highgate Library and Community Center Feasibility Study. The Highgate Public Library successfully competed against 69 other community projects and was one of the 38 funded.

The Trustees have worked diligently during 2016 to prioritize the future needs of the library over the next 20 years. The programs and services identified will enable economic advantage, educational opportunity and needed social services to enrich the lives of Highgate residents. The Trustees participated in the following activities to prioritize these services:

- The Trustees conducted two focus groups of community members. These groups were interviewed to get their opinions about the library, how the library is evolving and the future of the library.
- The Trustees attended a Saturday board retreat last September with the staff and a facilitator to prioritize goals.
- The Trustees attended several planning commission and selectboard meetings to discuss the capital improvement plan and planning grant.

If you are a resident of Highgate, we value your input and we have several more opportunities for you to be a part of the process. If you have time to give, please leave your contact information with the library.

The Trustees worked closely with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to put together our grant that was funded. The major issues of concern for the grant application are:

- The current library space is not adequate to meet the current and future needs of the Highgate community. This project will evaluate the current space to develop conceptual layouts and costs for either remodeling the current building or constructing a new building within the designated village center.
- Our library is a well-used resource in the town, but the facility's physical limitations reduce operational efficiencies and hinder the expansion of programming and community outreach.
- While the library does have an ADA compliant ramp on the outside of the building, the inside is not fully ADA compliant.

- The building is limited by fire code to a maximum capacity of 49 people. There are many current programs that already exceed this capacity.
- In 2015 there were 8,885 total library visits, a 137% increase from 2005. This number is expected to rise at least at the same level.
- The number of materials circulated has risen by 230% in the last ten years to over 10,700 items in 2015. With a little over 5,000 books that's every book in the library taken out two times in one year. While the demand is clearly there, the library cannot expand its current collection because of lack of space.
- The library also provides a space for many community services and allows residents to access these services in town, rather than having to travel. In addition, the library also runs an extensive number of community programs. Some of these programs must be run off-site due to space limitations. Other programs that are held at the library are not as efficient because of space limitations.

For more information on what's going on at the library, a link to the Highgate Library Informational Video can be found on the library's Facebook page and Youtube channel.

Awarded annually and administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Municipal Planning Grant program supports local community revitalization and planning initiatives. Since 1998, the program has provided over \$11 million to 234 cities and towns across Vermont to help breathe new life into communities, plan for future growth and development and improve our quality of life. Follow the below link below to learn more.

<http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>