

FITCHBURG

# Library forms group to cover \$3.5M in project costs

Committee supports \$40M library renovation project



The Fitchburg Public Library recently announced it has named a steering committee for the OWL (Offering a World of Learning) Capital Campaign, which is focused on raising \$3.5 million toward the design, construction, furnishings, and equipment as part of the \$40 million total library renovation project scheduled to begin later this year.

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BY DANIELLE RAY

[DRAY@SENTINELANDENTERPRISE.COM](mailto:DRAY@SENTINELANDENTERPRISE.COM)

FITCHBURG >> The library recently put a new group in charge of bringing in another \$3.5 million to contribute to the \$40 million library renovation project scheduled to begin later this year.

The steering committee for the OWL (Offering a World of Learning) Capital Campaign will bring additional funds to cover a variety of expenses for the renovation project including design, construction, furnishings and equipment.

The committee members want to make sure the library, which was founded in 1859 and had one of the first children's rooms in the country, will continue to be a valuable resource as it has in the past.

"The Fitchburg Public Library is the centerpiece of Main Street providing free enrichment to the residents for generations," steering committee member Ellen DiGeronimo said. "We are honored to have an esteemed committee of local professionals from various backgrounds who have committed to providing their time and expertise to ensure this amazing asset will be available for generations to come."

The steering committee includes community and business leaders including Co-Chairs Sharon Bernard, former executive director of the library, and Rob Favini, a former library trustee, as well as Honorary Co-chair Robert Antonucci, past president of Fitchburg State University.

"The library is a central piece of Fitchburg's downtown revitalization, and just as much as the city of Fitchburg needs the library, the library needs Fitchburg, too," Antonucci said. "An expanded and renovated library will have a positive impact on everyone in Fitchburg—preschoolers, children, teens, adults, and seniors—it will touch everyone's lives."

In addition, Cheryl Gaudreau of Enterprise Bank, longtime city resident and retired educator Bill McSheehy, and Jim Walsh, a Fitchburg School Committee member, are serving as committee members.

Additional support for the renovation project will be provided through a variety of funds including a \$12.5 million grant award from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners through the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program and a combination of the City of Fitchburg's American Rescue Plan Act funding and the city's capital budget.

The Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts is managing the Fitchburg Public Library Building Fund for campaign gifts. All funds raised towards the \$3.5 million campaign goal will go directly to the renovation project.

"Our campaign will ensure the future of the Fitchburg Public Library as a foundational institution and support a defining moment in the city's history," Fitchburg Public Library Executive Director Deborah Hinkle said. "With our committee leading the efforts, we can reimagine the Fitchburg Public Library so that it can respond to the needs and interests of all for years to come."

The committee is supported by Lauren Howe, owner of empHowered PR, who is serving as Chair, Marketing and Communications, and Meagan Donoghue, Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority Executive Chair, who is serving as Chair, Corporate and Foundation Grants. The steering committee is also working with a group of at-large volunteers to assist in fundraising efforts.

Gifts to the OWL Capital Campaign can be made via cash gifts and multi-year pledges, matching gifts, and mutual fund shares or stock, and acknowledged as memorials, tributes and named spaces. Naming opportunities include the new addition, new children's library, community room, library garden, conference room, and many others throughout the renovated and new areas.

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