

NORTH BRANFORD LIBRARY BOARD SURVEY

COMMENTS

On the following pages I have compiled all of the comments written in on survey forms. I think people who took the time to write, in addition to filling out the survey, would expect their comments to be relayed to the Board.

Positive or negative, these are statements of real concern from people who care about what happens to their libraries.

Bob Hull
9/30/91

Comments on library growth and construction:

I'm happy with the library as it is now. We just retired, so we're on a fixed income and have already experienced a tax increase since moving here two years ago.

I believe with economic conditions being as they are, expansion of any building is out of the question. However, proper maintenance of both buildings should be maintained. The people of Northford will not benefit by having to drive distances of 3 or more miles to use library facilities. If our town had public transportation through Rte. 17 to Rte. 22 & Rte. 80 at regular intervals, one could see the advantages of a centralized library. But our situation and economic status warrant cautious spending at this time.

By building a new centralized library and closing off the other two it would save on utilities of one whole building. Less labor cost of two buildings. Less commuting distance for schools. Better hours. Better parking. Special nights for adult programs too.

Books would not have to be brought back & forth from one library to another. We would not have to borrow from other libraries if you had more and better assortments of books.

It would also be nice if there could be a notary public available instead of searching the town for one.

To centralize in just one library might be OK if and only if it could be centralized to everyone involved, but due to the size and shape of the two sections of town, this might be impossible. To keep both buildings open, and expand, is a better choice. Because of the many schools and needs and land location, both libraries are needed and duplication of important books is also needed. Even now, when different projects are assigned by teachers, there becomes a shortage of material to use and we have to go to other towns to get it.

Both libraries do a splendid job with the space they have. A bit more would help tremendously, rather than incur the expenditure of a new building.

With the pooling of the two libraries together, more materials would be available in one central area. Two towns which border North Branford, both North Haven and Wallingford, have very large proximities, but only one facility. By making a central library the town would begin to have a central meeting place, and perhaps in the future a community center atmosphere. With schools now functioning together, all town services should look to the benefits of combination, not fragmented duplication.

I have just recently moved to Northford and as of yet I have not visited the library myself. My four-year-old son has attended some of the story hours at the Smith Library. Please do not close that library. Having the library that close to us was a big bonus for buying our house in this area. I wish I could contribute more to your survey; however, I felt compelled to voice my opinion.

I could understand why the two libraries could be closed and one new one built. We could sell the other two buildings and save on some staff (both are open at the same time) etc. And we can use some more things in the libraries like books on tape & videos & computers etc. . . . but the hint of more taxes and expenses related to anything just would be ridiculous. If the town has some more money without raising taxes I'm all for it. Otherwise you are doing a fine job under the circumstances.

We don't mind using other libraries, it keeps the taxes down.

This town falls short for children's programs as compared to other towns. Blackstone Library is superior as is North Haven and Wallingford for programs, speakers, etc. Perhaps we could model ours as theirs without costly renovations and new buildings.

The way the economy is now, we can ill afford increased taxes to fund new buildings. If there is "grant" money available I suggest it be spent on staff to keep the present buildings open longer hours and on more books.

I read constantly! Your "new/current" fiction selection is very limited. I usually buy paperbacks and donate them to Smith when I'm done.

I am not a frequent user of the library due primarily to its restricted hours. A centralized library with longer hours might make sense, but there is no centralized town center. Also, does it make sense to abandon two buildings? It is difficult to select options without understanding the fiscal impacts.

In an ideal world, both libraries, spruced up and open from 9-5 daily with some evening hours too, would probably be best for this town with its two separate and distinct centers.

Being a 32-year resident and owning books from Shakespeare to Ellery Queen, I only use the facility in Northford to obtain a book on a subject of interest which I may not possess.

If the result of this survey indicates the present facilities are sufficient, then let's not spend money just to say, "We have a new library." We expect residents who form a board to be honest and also aware that the budget crunch closing libraries in other towns is not the case in our town.

With a new revaluation coming up, the taxpayers will not stand for the creation of "Pork Barrels", particularly when as residents you are aware of the thousands of dollars many home owners have to lay out over the next 20 years for sewers, because of the inactivity in acting on large Federal and State grants available in 1982 and allowed to die by our Town Council.

[We are] strongly opposed to centralization. A library located near the police station would not serve North Branford/Northford residents as well as the present setup.

We have two separate communities! If you are determined to offer facilities of both libraries to all citizens, the least expensive way would be to buy a van and run a bus service between the existing libraries.

Dear Library Board:

First off - who are you? I feel you should have stated your names on the enclosed survey - a curious and strange omission.

I do not feel we need to expand or renovate either library. Better use of the facilities and longer hours could ease North Branford of any pressure on the building right now.

With Connecticut Card and availability of neighboring town libraries, North Branford doesn't need to incur additional expenses for us taxpayers. By computer and phone, we can locate the resources we need, and we DO NOT need to duplicate other town's facilities. It is not a situation where the other libraries are 40-50 miles away. At most, there is relatively little distance - some, just 5-6 miles away.

Expand one library - close the other.

I am usually able to get books through our library from other libraries. There is always space to work.

One central library would seem to be more cost effective.

RESPONSE FOR #10. #1: The possibility of building a central library, etc., should be carefully and thoroughly explored. #2: I believe that this possibility - improving both libraries - is a second choice but it should also be carefully and thoroughly explored. #3: I oppose this procedure - expanding one library and having the other continue as a branch.

RESPONSE FOR #11. Modern libraries are doing so much to provide expanded and new services, and to provide those services in such modern and efficient ways, that I hesitate to make any specific suggestions except one: for all planning, attempt to obtain the services of the most experienced and capable library consultants available.

My main concern about any new building is that it be centrally located. I've lived here over thirty years and am unhappy about the inconvenient locations of town buildings like the Town Hall!

Hopefully sometime money may be available for expansion if prosperity returns. For now, forget it!

We are away a lot, therefore don't use libraries much. Since I work in Wallingford, their library is just as convenient for me.

[Libraries are] adequate for current holdings, but the holdings should be increased (and then a new building would become necessary).

Please leave well enough alone. We could stand some more parking and a larger selection of books and materials. We go to North Haven only when something is not available. This may happen twice a year.

Some years ago, the Town of North Branford Library Board had thought to build a large central library. Then Ellsworth Foote looked into the Atwater endowment or grant and found: if the building were relocated, we would lose the grant. So this must be considered. I would hate to lose Atwater.

P.S. We have access to state libraries etc. - more books.

Do not relocate Atwater Library.

[Would use a central library] perhaps a bit less. Present location of Smith is good because it's on the way to and from work.

I love the Smith Library and its present location.

The location of the Smith Library is very convenient. I stop spur of the moment as I'm passing by.

I really use only the Atwater Library. I find it perfectly satisfactory for my needs. When its travel section is insufficient, I use the main library in New Haven. Insofar as my use is concerned, no changes are necessary

Most people like a library they can get to with the least problems. For myself and my kids the closer the better. Smith Library has given us many hours of enjoyment. And if other books are needed, they always get them for us. We may have to wait a few days. But service here is the key word. Smith will always be the only library for us.

Our children are just starting at Stanley T. Williams. We would like to see the Northford Library remain close to the schools.

For economic reasons I feel that we should renovate or expand the libraries. I don't feel that there is a need for new buildings. Please think of the TAXPAYER!

I'm from Northford and have a child in school. We use the library often and like having one in our town, as it is very convenient. Also we like our library.

Northford is the oldest part of North Branford. Stop taking everything away from our section of town.

Not everyone loves the cats:

As much as I find it cute to have a cat in the Atwater Library, I am so allergic to cats it makes it hard for me to enjoy the library.

I have a personal comment to make. I live only five minutes away from the North Branford Library. However, I hardly ever go there because they have cats running around in the building. I have asthma and I am allergic to them. Therefore, I let my children go in, quickly pick up a book and I have to stay in my car. I have asked more than once if they could put the cats in another room but was told there would be no guarantee that the cats wouldn't "slip out" and be back in the library. Another time I was told "oh well, I guess you'll have to go to a different library".

I did go to the Northford Library at least once a month but they have cats now too so I now go to the Guilford Library. I also know several other children and adults who can't go there either because of their allergies.

Atwater has too many animals (it smells).

Picks and pans:

I love the convenience of the Smith Library. It is homey, has pleasant staff, and always acquires for our family the books it does not own. Service is excellent. Hopefully a larger, more efficient facility would not change that.

I do like the library [Atwater] and enjoy getting books. Can't find some I would like, but I must say, they are very pleasant and helpful people who work there.

Smith has great children's programs but could use more space for them.

As a Smith Library patron, I would like to see more books at Smith. We have a large card file with most of the books housed at Atwater.

Both libraries need: 1. expanded, updated reference materials; 2. a collection development policy regarding research materials; 3. quiet study facilities; 4. pleasing decor - unlike the garish yellow interior of the Smith Library; 5. my child used the library when she was young.

Once she reached high school, however, the reference and research materials were so inadequate that we started using larger, better equipped facilities in other towns.

I presently use the Smith Library with my two children. The staff is great! Very helpful, friendly, glad to see you, etc. I like the children's section. It's homey and fun for the kids. They like to go there so it encourages reading. I read at least a book a week or more and you can always find a new book available.

I think some of the selections the librarians have chosen for videos for the Northford/North Branford collections are APPALLING and wasting our money on TRASH. Do we really need to own a copy of "Blue Velvet" or "Prizzi's Honor"? (@ \$20 a copy?)

I find the staff rather unprofessional and a little too "relaxed" when I've used the libraries. I don't want to hear stories of their personal lives going on in loud, clear tones while I am browsing. Neither do I need to hear people at the circulation desk taking personal phone calls and discussing personal problems! There's a limit to folksiness.

Sounds as if library expansion is being considered as a foregone conclusion. I will do my best to stop unnecessary tax increases because of unwise and unnecessary library expansions.

I use other libraries because I don't like the attitude of some at Atwater (not the head). I feel uncomfortable asking for help from some with sour faces. I just stopped going.

I haven't used the Atwater Library but once or twice (it is out of my traffic pattern), so I don't feel that I can comment on the facilities there. I do like the friendly atmosphere of a small-town library at Smith. The staff is always pleasant and helpful.

We love the small-town feeling of our library. However, we do use the North Haven one also, due to the limited books (due to space, we would guess, and probably, as always, money). The Resource Center is good in North Haven.

We truly enjoy and are thankful for the Children's Room and wonderful programs Debbie runs! Wouldn't want to lose the Smith Library. Northford section of town doesn't have much else for children and also for adults who enjoy it! Let's hope we have much support to better it for all!

May I add, when we first moved here 11 years ago, the building size amused us when we drove by, but, we were pleasantly surprised when we ventured in!

We love the Smith Library and its personnel, especially the excellent children's programs. Please don't destroy what is already in place when trying to improve things.

[Use of a central library] depends on location. North Haven might turn out to be closer.

Location [of a central library] would be of paramount importance. Libraries should be open during school holidays and breaks as well.

We love books and the library, but as I stated on the back the people who work in the Children's Library in North Branford [Atwater] need to be more pleasant and patient with the children and their parents. This is why I use the library in Northford even though we live in North Branford.

As children get older, they will need to do more research for school work.

I do not feel the library needs to offer VCR's. Let Stop&Shop and video stores provide them! I want people to read.

Why do you charge for videos? Branford does not.

Your selection of books is VERY limited.

I think it would be very good to have a good library for the school children. I used to live in mine, in the small town where I grew up and went to school.

When doing research, some of the books are outdated. Most of the books I take out are to learn about a topic.

If possible, longer hours would help. So many people work five or six days a week. It's not always easy to get to the library.

[Other libraries we use] are different sorts of libraries offering us work-related materials that a small public library should not ordinarily contain. [We would like to see] outreach programs for shut-ins or people without transportation.

[North Branford's libraries] need more isolated areas for reference and research.

The problem is not the location of Atwater though it is some distance, but rather when I want a book on weaving or rug hooking it's not available or it's at Smith. Frequently the recreational reading we want is not available. We find it easier to go to Guilford to the paperback book shop and buy used paperbacks, read them and return them. I also buy most craft books I want. We read a great deal and believe in libraries - we just don't seem to make connections.

Would like to see Atwater open Fridays after noon. Would like to see Conn. Humanities book discussions at the library - daytime book discussion groups for retirees possibly - many of us don't like to drive at night.

It's a shame the library policy is such that you do not accept donations of books. You are losing a gold mine of information.

[We would like to see] longer hours, especially mornings, and Saturdays in the summer.

We purchased home purposely in walking distance of library. There is nothing central except NBPD - maybe [central library would be acceptable] as part of government center project. Expand with public access facilities which also have a community resources/communication/entertainment mission.

[We would like to see] hours on Friday night. It is one of the most useful and necessary times for children to do research and have time at night to use a library, and we can't.

The inter-library loan system is great. I have borrowed many hard-to-find and out-of-print books this way. [I would like to see the] library open more hours - especially Friday afternoons.

No opinion on #10 - whatever is feasible. I'll use the library wherever you put it.