

January 29, 2019

## Letter to the Community

At the request of Orangetown Supervisor Chris Day, the Palisades Free Library Board of Trustees is exploring the idea of forming a special district library through the consolidation of the Palisades, Tappan and Orangeburg Libraries.

Consolidation may provide our libraries with greater long-term financial security. As an association library, our funding is determined annually by the five Orangetown Town Board members, none of whom live in Palisades. Our library also falls under the town's 2% tax cap and Supervisor Day has expressed that he would like the libraries removed from the town's rolls.

Over the past decade, funding from the Town Board—the library's major funding source— has steadily dropped from comprising 89% of our annual budgeted revenues in 2011 to 75% of budgeted (adopted) revenues in 2019.

Town Revenue as a percentage of overall funding for the Palisades Free Library:

2011 – 89%

2012 – 89%

2013 – 88%

2014 – 87%

2015 – 88%

2016 – 83%

2017 – 78%

2018 – 76% (adopted)

2019 – 75% (adopted)

We have worked closely with Director Maria Gagliardi to be diligent financial stewards for our library. For the past several years, our library has sought budget efficiencies, pursued grant opportunities and relied on our reserves to cover funding shortfalls. We also sought to increase school district funding for our library in 2016. However, these aren't sustainable solutions for preserving our building and providing the quality of services our Palisades community expects of its library, so we need to pursue other means through which we may better secure our library's future.

Special district libraries present their budgets directly to voters for approval and can bond, if needed, for major capital expenditures. Association libraries cannot do either. As a special district library, the three libraries would become branches managed by a single board of trustees with a single budget.

**Please know that we are very much at the beginning of this inquiry. No change is imminent.**

On January 15, we presented the idea of consolidation to the Orangetown Town Board to obtain their feedback ([view the video here](#)) before committing resources to a more comprehensive, exploratory process. With the Town Board's support, the three libraries will now move forward with engaging Pattern for Progress to conduct a formal study of the efficiencies and challenges of establishing a special district library.

If after reviewing the study our Board of Trustees deems consolidation to be in the best interest of our library, we will vote to pursue forming a special district library with the Tappan and Orangeburg Libraries. All three libraries must agree to move forward with consolidation. Then, the state senate and assembly must pass legislation to approve a referendum and the governor must sign the legislation to grant the formation of a special district library. Finally, the residents of Palisades, Tappan and Orangeburg will vote on the referendum, elect trustees and approve funding for the special district library. Our community will have the final say of whether or not to consolidate our libraries.

The library trustees would like to hear from our residents so that their concerns can be addressed in the process of evaluating the consolidation. We will have a public comment period at the beginning of our next board meeting on Thursday, February 7, 2019 at 7:30 pm at the Palisades Free Library. You may also reach out to a trustee or stop by the library and speak to Library Director Maria Gagliardi.