



The Borough of Darby

P.O. Box 351 • 1020 RIDGE AVENUE • DARBY, PENNSYLVANIA 19023

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
(610) 586-1102 / 1103

CODE ENFORCEMENT
(610) 586-0428

Dear Sir or Madam:

As Mayor and Council President of Darby Borough we are writing in wholehearted support of the Darby Free Library Renovation & Resilience Initiative, a project to replace the mechanical systems and repair the foundation and masonry of the oldest continually-operating library in The United States.

For many years the Darby Free Library has struggled to remain open, which it has done even through the Covid 19 pandemic, with very few resources. Now it has come to our attention that the very foundation of the building is crumbling and requires immediate remediation. Lack of proper heating, cooling and ventilation systems has meant that moisture has become a severe problem, eroding the brick structure, causing rising damp, and putting our collections and historic archives in peril.

This initiative intends to address those symptoms, as well as install a modern HVAC system to resolve the causes, mindful that the building mechanicals must function in sympathy with the historic fabric of the building and not put it in further danger. Installing modern mechanicals will also improve the comfort and functioning of the building, which now employs a piecemeal solution of window units for cooling, and open windows for fresh air, and was in need of an update even before we discovered these additional issues. The project also aims to modernize our antiquated lighting to highly-efficient LED lamping, which will save on operating costs, be less harmful to collections, and improve the environment for patrons.

Our community simply cannot afford to lose this resource. While blessed with many houses of worship, we have few other steadfast institutions in our town, and only one library. Our library does so much more than just lend books (though that would be reason enough). Originally founded in 1743, we also house an important research collection, composed of local Darby photographs, documents and archives, including several volumes from the founding collection.

While we don't have the space or resources for a "teen" room, or even a separate children's area, our library provides enrichment programs, live homework help, and a safe place for children after school. It also lends Chromebooks in house, and provides often sole internet access for many

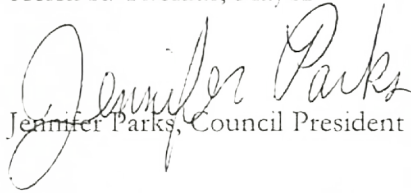
residents. Nearly 30% of Darby residents have income under the federal poverty level. Access to printers, internet and computer assistance is vital for job applications, unemployment and medical assistance services, in addition to homework.

That is why we support the Darby Library Board, a group of area residents, and our hardworking library staff in pursuing funding for this essential institution in our town.

Sincerely,



Helen R. Thomas, Mayor



Jennifer Parks, Council President

March 30, 2021

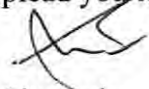
To: Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon

Letter of Support for fixing Darby Library Building

Dear Mary Gay Scanlon,

It is my pleasure to write a letter in support of the Darby public library located at 1001 Main Street in Darby Borough, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. I have known the Darby free library for more than 10 years and I have been using it most intensively since the last summer. At the time when all the public facilities out of service due to the COVID19 Pandemic, this library is the only place open where I could go out. For me, this library is an oasis in a desert. Because of this library, I have got access to free wifi and an air-conditioned place to sit down, relax and read. Couple months of ago, in this very library, I wrote my Ph.D. proposal and got accepted for next academic year. At present, I am taking online courses and this library is my only place to come and study. The library has the most welcoming and helpful staffers. They lent me their support in editing my proposals and proctoring me for my online exam. During my visits to the library, I have seen people from the community coming to use computers and the internet, apply for jobs, apply for benefits, kids coming with their parents borrowing books, and college students frequently using the library. I have also learned this library houses a number of very ancient books.

It is disheartening to see this historic library building walls cracking and falling down. I kindly urge you to support this library by any means possible. Fixing this library would be a helping many kids families in and around the surrounding community. Therefore I sincerely plead you to fund the renovation of Darby's free library.



Sincerely,

Binyam Halalo

binyam_abate@yahoo.com

267-632-4275

To Whom it May Concern,

Every town has a culture around which it is built—that tangible or intangible something that drives ideals, fosters hope for better for its community and strives to promote a vision of what could be. From the forethought of those long-gone residents of Darby who rallied around the importance of literacy long ago, we fast forward to the 21st Century and this same library continues to be a major artery for the community.

Libraries have had to evolve to meet the changing needs of its communities. Darby Free Library keeps pace--not just with books, not just computers, not just meeting space. There is a genuine desire and heart to serve the needs of the community—regardless of obstacles and limitations.

These days, society tends to take on a “throw away” culture to those things which become old--instead of appreciating its longevity, character and strength. Darby Free Library deserves that appreciation and support and help to rise again better and stronger.

I support the Darby Free Library. Let us not diminish nor dismiss its value to its community. Rather, please see it as a cornerstone of the foundation of this town around which a culture of possibilities is promoted now, for a stronger future.

Thank you

Kim Ferris

8TH DISTRICT
ANTHONY H. WILLIAMS

SENATE BOX 203008
THE STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3008
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215-492-2980 • FAX: 215-492-2990

2103 SNYDER AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19145
215-755-9185 • FAX: 215-952-3375

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WEBSITE: www.senatoranthonyhwilliams.com

Democratic Whip



Senate of Pennsylvania

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ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES &
ENERGY
LAW & JUSTICE
RULES & EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS
POLICY

LEGISLATIVE DATA PROCESSING
COMMITTEE

March 30, 2021

Ms. Susan Borders, Director
Darby Free Library
1001 Main St.
Darby, PA 19023

Dear Sue:

This letter is to support the Darby Free Library's application for the Community Project Funding grant. In the 275 years since its founding, the Darby Free Library still operates as the oldest continuously operating Public Library in the United States in a building built in 1872, designed without electricity, heat, or running water.

Today, the forty-three original volumes are on display along with over 20,000 volumes of fiction, non-fiction, and reference books, plus audio, DVD and video tapes. The library's contribution to the community is immeasurable as it continues its mission to "foster among the residents of the Borough of Darby and its vicinity the spirit of self-improvement."

Given the age of the building, its history as an anchor for community learning, and the critical need for updating its infrastructure, I strongly endorse your grant application and wish you the best of luck in preserving and modernizing this important landmark for future generations of Delaware Countians.

Sincerely,

Anthony H. Williams
State Senator – 8th District

Why the Darby Library needs to stay.

Because it is the only library I can walk to. The people there are nice.

They have lots of books about sharks, even DVDs. They have fun stuff to do after school.

I like looking into the microscope and sometime if it is dark they let us use the telescope.

We make stuff with Miss Joyce. There are STEM toys I don't have at my house. Lots of stuff to build with like LEGOs, blocks and magnet shapes.

If it closes, I won't have anything to do afterschool

Blair

JOANNA E. McCLINTON, MEMBER
DEMOCRATIC LEADER
191ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
423 MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING
P.O. BOX 202191
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120-2191
PHONE: (717) 772-9850
FAX: (717) 783-1516



52 SOUTH 60TH STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19139
PHONE: (215) 748-6712
FAX: (215) 748-1687
WWW.REPMcCLINTON.COM

House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

April 5, 2021

The Honorable Mary Gay Scanlon
1227 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Scanlon:

I am writing to register my support for inclusion of the Darby Free Library to your list of recommended projects under the Community Project Funding program.

As the nation's oldest continually operated public library, Darby Free Library has been a beacon of hope and opportunity for the surrounding community, providing a wealth of resources to our area for decades. The library is truly part of the fiber of Delaware County. With this distinction, however, come real and pressing challenges. The current building is approximately 150 years old and has never had major renovation projects in its history. While providing crucial resources and programs to the community at large, the library's physical issues are numerous and growing with each passing year. For example, access to the library is difficult, as patrons have to climb several stairs both inside and outside the building. It is a barrier for anyone to enter, let alone someone with disabilities. The library has indicated to me that they simply do not have the means to fund this or any other needed capital improvements, unlike other institutions within the Delaware County Libraries system.

The physical issues and limitations of the Darby Free Library have made it consistently more difficult for the library to offer their services to the surrounding community, a community that is home to many families living below the poverty line that need essential library services now more than ever. As the nation begins to address how infrastructure investment has magnified the growing inequality in America, I can think of few more deserving projects than funding necessary improvements to the library in a town of working families that have been struggling, particularly in a time of COVID-19.

The Darby Free Library has consistently demonstrated its commitment to its patrons and the community. The library staff, and the families they serve, deserve our best efforts to support their paths to a better future. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter in-depth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanna".

Joanna McClinton
State Representative
191st Legislative District
House Democratic Leader



Darby Friends Meeting
1017 Main Street
Darby, Pennsylvania 19023

Dear Sir or Madam,

As Clerk of the Darby Friends Meeting, I would like to express my hope that the Darby Free Library continues to be a thriving part of the town of Darby, and receives the funding it needs for the *Darby Free Library Renovation* project.

The histories of our Meeting and the library are intertwined. Members of the Darby Quaker Meeting founded the original subscription Darby Library Company, naturalist and meeting member John Bartram helped bring its original books here from England, and when a site was needed for a permanent structure, the Meeting provided part of its own lot for the 1872 building which graces the corner of 10th and Main.

Times change - the Darby Friends School which once educated most of the town's children was superseded by the public school system, the library which was started by a few men by subscription is now open to one and all. While many of these changes herald our progress in equality and public access, it is a continual struggle to provide fair and reliable opportunities to all residents, especially the children, in our community. Let us not fail them now.

The Darby Quaker Meeting is working to preserve and beautify its building and grounds, and we welcome a renovated and strengthened neighbor. Three of the Quaker testimonies are Equality, Community and Stewardship – all qualities we hold dear and certainly relevant to the preservation of the Darby Free Library. We two remain integral pillars in the town of Darby, our beginnings a shared history, and our future forever linked as neighbors.

Sincerely,

John S Child, Jr

Community Project Funding for 2022

I have had the pleasure of working at the Darby Free Library for 11 years. The Library is a great asset to our community. On a daily basis, we help our patrons to access government information on websites, to fill out employment forms, to compose resumes, to seek employment, etc.

We also provide low-cost fax services, copying, and printing services for our community. This is additional to our prime services as a library. We also conduct many educational programs for the students and children in our community.

We take the time necessary to help our community patrons to accomplish their tasks.

Sincerely,

ALBERT RENZULLI

Mgr. Circulation, Darby Free Library

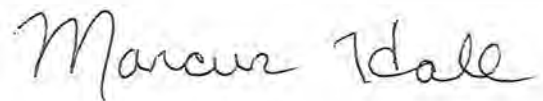
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Albert Renzulli".

Community Project Funding for 2022

I also have the pleasure and the opportunity of working with the Darby Free Public Library, which I love because being a musician I love people. In addition, the Darby Free Library is an essential need for this area of Delaware County because it serves the learning and cultural needs in this area.

Sincerely,

MARCUS HALL

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marcus Hall". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the printed name "MARCUS HALL".

Keep my Library by Tessa

Keep my Library

Because it's so great

It has books about apes

It's old but still good.

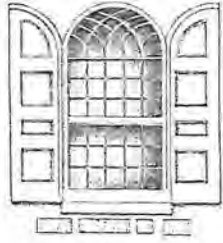
The shelves are made of wood.

The librarians are so nice

They give me homework advice.

Don't let it fall down

That will make me frown.



**HERITAGE
COMMISSION of
DELAWARE COUNTY**

c/o Delaware County Planning Department
1055 E. Baltimore Pike
Media, PA 19063 (610) 891-5200

March 29, 2021

Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon
Chester Office
2501 Seaport Drive
BH230
Chester, PA 19013

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Heritage Commission of Delaware County, I would like to extend the commission's support to help secure funding through the "Community Project Funding Grant 2022" with the aim to secure funding for roof repairs, water runoff mitigation, structural foundation, brick wall mortar repairs, insulation envelope, comprehensive HVAC and humidity control, energy recovery positive ventilation and solar PV for Darby Free Library Renovation Project located at 1001 Main Street in Darby Borough, Pennsylvania.

The Heritage Commission is a County Council appointed advisory group charged with promoting the cultural heritage of Delaware County. The Heritage Commission has worked with the various historical societies and commissions in Darby Borough for many years. The Darby Library Company was established in 1743 by Quakers as a subscription library and in 1898 the library became a free library and open to the public. It remains one of the oldest public libraries in continuous service in the United States. The current building located at 1001 Main Street in Darby was completed in 1872.

We feel that the repairs being requested for the building are needed not only to revitalize the library and its services to the local community, but to also protect the repository of Borough artifacts and historical documents. Keeping it as a vital structure in the community creates opportunities for the borough and county to encourage revitalization both locally and regionally.

I would like to thank you for your continued support and commitment to preserving the heritage of Delaware County. If you should have any questions regarding the Heritage Commission's support for this project, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Marinelli

Barbara E. Marinelli
Chairman

March 25, 2021

Delaware County Libraries
Darby@DelcoLibraries.org

To whom it may concern,

I learned that the Darby Free Library is in need of major repairs. I am writing to you today because I support using Community Project Funding to perform this work.

I was born and raised in Darby, and I still have family in the area. The Darby Free Library was a very important part of my childhood. My family could not afford to buy me books, and the Darby library was the only place I could have access to them. I spent many happy hours there, especially during summer vacations, searching for Nancy Drew Mysteries and Cherry Ames, Nurse books as well as many other titles. I felt very special when I could climb the circular stairs to the upper level of books as I got older. Today, the residents of Darby are still poor and in need of the services the library provides. Having access to a library that is close by is crucial for the children's independence and ease of use.

In addition, it is a very important historical building, being one of the oldest libraries in the United States; and I believe it behooves us as a country to save significant structures and remember our history.

I urge all decision makers to approve of the upgrade to the Darby Free Library so that it can continue to serve the residents in need in the area.

Yours truly,

Christine M. Mills

1621 Waller Street #2
San Francisco, CA 94117
415-386-5138



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Vice Chair

Kevin M. Madden
Elaine Paul Schaefer
Christine A. Reuther

Ms. Susan Borders, Director
Darby Free Library
1001 Main St.
Darby, PA 19023

Dear Sue:

This letter is to support the Darby Free Library's application for the Community Project Funding grant. As the nation's oldest public library, in continuous service since 1743, Darby Free Library's historical significance within Delaware County is immeasurable. The building requires a myriad of renovations to preserve not only the exterior, but the valuable items held within. Several specific building needs for the Darby Free Library are:

- A specialized mechanical insulation system.
- A new roof, along with gutters and downspouts to direct water away from the building.
- Significant repairs on brick walls that are crumbling and bowing out along with repointing using lime mortar.
- A rain garden to reduce runoff from the building.
- Solar roof panels and the replacement of all lighting with LED bulbs.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, rather just a sampling of structural and facility items that should be addressed sooner rather than later. It is incumbent upon us to preserve our history for future generations and I wholeheartedly support the Library's application. Thank you for your consideration of this worthwhile project.

Sincerely,

Catherine Bittle

DELAWARE COUNTY LIBRARIES

340 N. Middletown Rd.
Fair Acres, Building #19
Media, PA 19063-5597
610-891-8622
Fax: 610-891-8641
www.delcolibraries.org



Catherine Bittle, Director

March 24, 2021



THE
FOUNDATION FOR
DELAWARE
COUNTY

- Cultivating Philanthropy
- Transforming Community

Tel 610.744.1010
Email info@delcofoundation.org
www.delcofoundation.org

200 E. State St., Suite 304
Media, PA 19063

The Honorable Mary Gay Scanlon
927 East Baltimore Pike
East Lansdowne, PA 19050

April 1, 2021

Dear Congresswoman Scanlon:

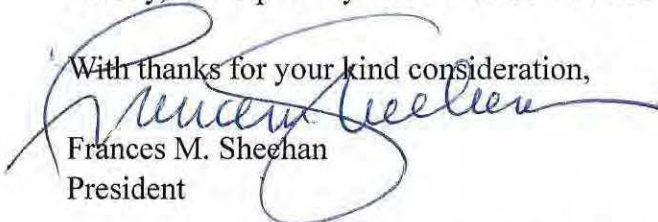
I write in support of The Darby Free Library's "Renovation & Resilience Initiative". The library's board, staff, and local citizens have joined together to address the serious structural problems with the library's historic building, as well as longstanding inadequacies in its mechanical systems. I urge you to support their application as the Borough of Darby is a struggling community for which their esteemed library is a literal lifeline to many.

The Foundation for Delaware County serves as this county's community foundation, encouraging philanthropy and investment in Delaware County. We also provide administrative services to non-profits, including to the Libraries Foundation of Delaware County, and run maternal health programs that emphasize literacy development for our youngest citizens. Our experience has been that libraries serve critical community functions beyond simply providing books, and as a result we were honored to provide grants to the Delaware County Library System during the 2020 Census drive.

The Darby Free Library has demonstrated outstanding service in its community vital to the health and well-being of local children, their families and caregivers, senior citizens, other vulnerable populations, and all others. They are a trusted source of information about free dental clinics, access to healthy food and nutrition information, education, job training and opportunities, and services to support our youth as they become our future leaders. They promote literacy for children, adults and immigrants, and are a cornerstone in building a healthy community and a partner in learning for the William Penn School District.

Darby's Free Library was begun in 1743, and stood in its current location since 1862. It is part of Darby's essential identity. Let us work to ensure that it prospers for all of Delaware County, and especially for the residents of Darby Borough.

With thanks for your kind consideration,



Frances M. Sheehan
President

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Kate Zidek
Frances M. Sheehan, President

William Penn School District

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
100 Green Avenue, Lansdowne, Pennsylvania 19050

www.WilliamPennSD.org



610-284-8000
Fax 610-284-9054

March 31, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

We at the William Penn School District offer our complete support of the *Darby Free Library Renovation* project. Our local libraries are formative partners in our mission to educate and sustain our children and support the families who raise them. Without a functioning building, the Darby Free Library cannot operate and house the vital services it provides our community. As has been highlighted in the past year, library functions are essential services. Not only do they provide all the regular functions of a public library, without them many of our students would not have had access to online schooling, homework assignments, and enrichment activities this past year. The Darby Free Library and its staff does an outstanding job engaging with its community and partnering with our school district.

Some of the services it has provided are:

- Remaining physically open (within CDC guidelines) when all other area libraries were closed during this past year's pandemic crisis.
- Hosting Dr. Carla Diane Hayden, Librarian of Congress, at the Darby Free Library on her visit to Philadelphia in September of 2017. Dr. Hayden is the first woman and the first African-American to hold the post, and the first professional librarian to hold the post in more than 60 years. The Darby Free Library Director, Ms. Sue Borders, invited the students from the William Penn School District to attend this seminal event.
- Putting together over 30 "Virtual field Trips" to help children and teens have fun while learning at home this past year. Some of the featured tours included a digital view of the planet Mars, a tour of the San Diego Zoo, Discovery Education Field Trips, Boston Children's Museum, and the Louvre Museum in Paris.
- Hosting the NASA@MYLIBRARY workshops where students can participate in a YouTube live event featuring programs like: "NASA from Earth to Mars and Beyond", with a live chat with a NASA solar system ambassador, and discussions of the Space Shuttle and the James Webb Space Telescope.
- Providing the following digital tools on our school district *Family Resource Center*:

Electronic Library Cards - students can receive their new library card number via e-mail

William Penn School District



ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
100 Green Avenue, Lansdowne, Pennsylvania 19050

www.WilliamPennSD.org

610-284-8000
Fax 610-284-9054

E-books & Audio-books through Overdrive

Simultaneous Use E-books - 125 new e-books for K-6 have been added to our holdings. These e-books are always available – no waiting!

Online Databases for Kids – resources for K-6 grade

On-line Databases for Teens – resources for 7 -12 grade

PA Power Library - students who want to use PA Power Library can either use their public library card or get a Power Library ecard

Help Now – on-line tutoring resource. A description of all it offers is below.

Homework Help - Interact with live tutors in math, science, reading/writing, social studies, PSAT/SAT, ACT, AP and state standardized tests.

Skills-Building - Choose your topic to receive real-time help.

Personalized eLearning Tools - My File Sharing, My Session Replay, My Tutoring Archive, My Tests Archive, and more!

24-Hour Writing Lab - Submit essays and other forms of writing for constructive feedback.

Homework Send Question - Submit homework questions for expert guidance.

Adult Learning Center - Access a library of rich adult learning content (GED) and live, professional assistance in resume/cover letter writing, U.S. citizenship prep, MS Office Essential Skills Series, and more!

Foreign Language Lab /Spanish-Speaking Support

Most important of all, the Darby Free Library is a building open and available to all, six days a week, every week of the year. I cannot think of a more deserving institution (aside from the William Penn School District!) worthy of our leaders' unreserved support.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Becoats, Ed.D.
Superintendent

To Whom It May Concern:

I was called upon to help draft this grant application for the *Darby Free Library Renovation & Resilience Initiative*, of which this letter is a part. In gathering documentation and supporting statements, and thinking intensely about the town and the library, I feel it all boils down to the fact that poor people who live in a poor town are faced by compound disadvantage. Other inequities can sometime be countered by their circumstances – a child born with a disability might have well-off parents who can afford extra services and time bringing up their child, for example. But poverty in the United States is an endless loop, where all the interventions which might be brought to bear are unavailable.

Darby is a town where many of the houses are blighted or derelict. The town recently put a moratorium on churches on Main Street because they were replacing so much of the tax base. The median price for a house in Darby is \$69,500. In the US as a whole it is \$231,200. Schools are funded through real estate taxes. The library is also funded locally. Other typical sources of support like friends, family, or religious institutions are also struggling. This means that the child reared in this environment who most needs a helping hand, is the least likely to find it. That is unfair, undemocratic, and yes, un-American. It is why President Biden has twice visited Darby this past year.

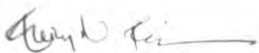
Even this grant application demonstrates the point. It has been an enormous task, and while the library staff and many other have worked to complete it, the bulk of the application has been done by two people who can afford to take time away from other jobs to work on it, nearly full-time, for two weeks, with good computer equipment, wifi and a printer. They also came from families which could afford to educate them well, and they both have advanced degrees.

Imagine what good would flow from a well-housed, well-staffed and well-stocked library in our neighborhood. Imagine the encouragement offered, and the sense of hope and worth given to those who have it so tough already.

But by making this possible, we not only help the most vulnerable in our neighborhood, we help everyone. We are not singling out special groups, even though they may be the ones who most benefit. A Free Library is open and available to all. Though I am able to buy books for myself and my daughter, I use the library all the time – because online or in person I can order just about any book I want through the Delaware County Library System. It will arrive two blocks from my house within days, and someone will call me to tell me it is ready to be picked up. That is remarkable.

It's remarkable, but in the United States having a local library that is respected and supported without reservation should not be, no matter how poor your town.

Sincerely,



Emily Finigan
Darby Resident

John W. Haigis
1006 Main Street
Darby, PA 19023
(610) 809-4856

Re: Darby Library Application for help

Darby Library
1001 Main Street
Darby, PA 19023

I am writing in support of the funding application of Darby Free Library, America's oldest public library in continuous use (founded 1743), not only because it is important historically, but even more because it is vital today and for the future. As a place of refuge, a place of learning, and as a community resource, Darby Library has been, and continues to be, vital. It remained open during the pandemic with programs and vital internet access.

Darby Library was started by a group of settlers from Darbyshire in England who, inspired by Benjamin Franklin's Library Company of Philadelphia, persuaded botanist John Bartram to call upon his network to arrange for books to be sent back in the empty boxes Bartram used to ship botanical specimens to Peter Collison in England. The books were kept in the librarian's homes until a building could be built in the 19th Century. Many of the original books are still on display.

The present building, built in 1872 is showing its age. As any of us would be after being of service for over 275 years, Darby Library needs help to continue to serve into the future.

Issues of water infiltration, wear and tear, and mechanical issues are compromising the structure and potentially endangering the safety of both building and patrons. I urge to you do whatever you can to help ensure that this community and cultural treasure can face the next century in good order, to serve new generations.

Thank you

John W. Haigis
Neighbor and former Chair,
Darby Borough Historical Commission

Blessed Virgin Mary School

47 MacDade Blvd.

Darby, PA 19023

610-86-0638

March 30, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Darby Library located on Main St. in Darby borough. Besides its historical significance, which is of utmost importance, the library has been a source of knowledge for many in the borough, especially our children.

Darby Library has provided gatherings for students in relation to topics, guest speakers and programs. As a Principal and educator, I always viewed the library as the center of information for students.

I wholeheartedly support the continuation of maintaining Darby Library's presence in our borough both as an historical building and to continue in its role as a place to get free books, use of free internet service for those who do not have it and a quiet place to study.

It is my hope that all will be done to keep Darby Library as both the oldest library in the country and a source of community for our borough.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Virginia Paschall".

Sister Virginia Paschall

Principal

March 29th,2021

To whom it may concern,

This letter is in support of the grant application for repairs to the bricks and mortar of Darby Library. I am a lifelong resident of Delaware County and grew up in Drexel Hill. I believe great history is located in Darby and especially the Library. My relative, Bill Frasch, worked long and hard to keep the Library and local history alive in Delaware County. The long and colorful history of the area, with so many diverse groups of people living and enjoying the area, lends itself to grants of preservation for all people of our county.

Sincerely,

Sheila Withelder, President Aston Township Historical Society

Janice Monk Haigis
1006 Main Street
Darby, PA 19023

RE: Darby Library

I am writing to recommend your favorable attention to the grant requesting restoration work on the bricks and mortar of the Darby Free Library, America's oldest public library in continuous use. Founded by Quakers and other residents of Darby, Pennsylvania in 1743, the Library's books were originally housed in the home of the Librarian and later at the Darby Friends Meetinghouse. By 1872, Darby Library Company was able to raise the funds to build a lovely, two-story brick building to house the Library's growing collections. That building is still the home of our Library.

An important part of the Darby community since its founding, Darby Library currently serves not only its own neighbors, but during the current Covid pandemic, it has been one of the few Delaware County libraries able to re-open to provide books, research opportunities, as well as computer usage and duplication services to a much larger part of the County .

As a Darby Library Company Trustee since 2005, I have seen the Library Director and her staff, along with our board members, provide many wonderful special programs in addition to regular library services for our patrons. The Darby Library received a special NASA grant, awarded to only two Pennsylvania libraries, which brought space suits, moon rocks, and a spectacular Eclipse event attended by more than 500 adults and children.

In addition to various STEM programs, Darby Library also encourages creativity by providing arts and craft programming for its young patrons. When school is in session, Darby Free Library provides a safe haven for young people after school, as well as a place to do homework. In short, the Darby Free Library is a very welcoming, needed, and important part of our community for all ages.

Though the building itself is only a 19th century structure, it is quickly approaching 150 years of service and thus is in need of prompt attention. We hope that you will be able to offer assistance to Darby Free Library so that we can continue to provide, and even expand, the many services we offer to our immediate community and our County.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jan Monk Haigis

Why 8 year old Ian Jones loves the Darby Library

Because there are a lot of dinosaur books.

I can learn about a lot of things.

Darby Free Library is very cool, I like that it is an old building.

I am always excited to go into the library.

Its fun to explore all the shelves and books.

Love you.

Ian
Ian

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Donors, Darby pols rally to save one of the nation's oldest libraries

Private donations and local political support have triggered hope that the cash-strapped Darby Free Library, believed to be the U.S.'s oldest continuously operating public library, won't be forced to close its doors at year's end.

by By WILLIAM BENDER, benderw@phillynews.com 215-854-5255

Published Aug 1, 2009

Private donations and local political support have triggered hope that the cash-strapped Darby Free Library, believed to be the U.S.'s oldest continuously operating public library, won't be forced to close its doors at year's end.

Darby Borough Council President Janice Davis said yesterday that the council would consider a small tax increase - the equivalent of \$5 to \$10 per resident - to help generate enough annual funding for the library.

"We're going to do whatever we have to do to keep the library going," she pledged.

Davis had initially been reluctant to raise taxes in Darby, home to 10,000 residents, saying earlier this year that she couldn't "see putting another burden on the taxpayers."

But it is becoming clearer that the historically significant library, which was founded in 1743 by 29 Quaker townsmen, is not going to survive without steady funding.

In January, library director Susan Borders announced that the library would likely have to close at the end of the year because of a nearly \$30,000 shortfall. The news triggered about \$10,000 in contributions from around the country.

Archie Dalton, for one, sent a \$1,000 check - from Arkansas.

"I've never been to Darby and probably will never be to Darby," said Dalton, 73, a retired Navy employee, "but I believe that the number one way to be rich is to have a library card," which he called a "passport to adventure and knowledge."

Schoolchildren use the Darby library, on 10th and Main streets, to do their homework and access the Internet. Through the library, residents can also access the 1.5 million books in the Delaware County Library System.

Davis said the borough council would take up the funding issue later this year.



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News



Despite hard times, Darby vows to save library

In Darby Borough, where the number of families living below the poverty line is twice the national average, a few dollars mean a lot.



Dequon Townend, 13, above, reads a book at the Darby Free Library. The library is housed in a building at 10th and Main Streets, left, that was built in 1872. A cut in state funding ha ... Read more
MICHAEL S. WIRTZ / Staff Photographer

by By Joelle Farrell, Inquirer Staff Writer
Published Nov 30, 2009

In Darby Borough, where the number of families living below the poverty line is twice the national average, a few dollars mean a lot.

Yet Darby officials, facing the possible closing of the historic library founded in 1743, say they are committed to keeping it open, even if taxes go up.

library.”

Still, in a community where industry crumbled long ago, officials aren't sure how they'll find the money. Library director Susan Borders said she hoped the township would fund the library with \$50,000, about \$5 per person, almost double the \$2.70 per person it receives now through a dedicated real estate tax.

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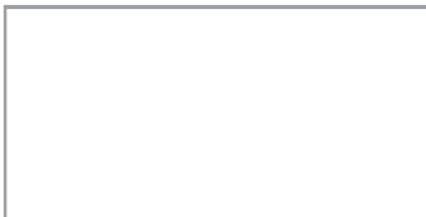
Borough Council President Janice Davis isn't sure residents can afford that.

"If our taxes and the school taxes go up, [residents] will be in a terrible position," Davis said. "We really have to work on this budget. Five dollars a person . . . is going to be an awful burden on the taxpayer."

Borough officials plan to begin budget discussions this week.

At a time when libraries in Philadelphia and across the state are cutting hours and staff, Darby, one of the poorest communities in Delaware County, hopes to patch the library's \$30,000 budget deficit, which was widened by a 20.8 percent cut in state funding this year.

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For some in Darby, the idea of higher taxes isn't as painful as the thought of losing the library.

"It's worth it," said Malachi Rayfield, 41, a chef who stops in daily to check his e-mail and who takes his 11-year-old son to the library each Saturday morning. "Some things you really don't want to lose. It's a good way to keep kids off the street."

Though officials plan to open a recreation center soon, the library remains an after-school haven for children. On a recent Friday afternoon, youngsters played with large stuffed alligators in a back corner of the tiny, one-room library while a boy still wearing his coat and backpack read a graphic novel. All five computers were occupied.

The library is crucial in a borough where many lack access to a home computer or car. Some patrons wait up to two hours to get online, Borders said. Some file online for unemployment or other financial assistance.

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"In the job market currently, everything is done online," Borders said. "Imagine if they had to walk over to Sharon Hill or Lansdowne and stand in line."

The library, considered the longest continuously operating public library in the nation, has been dipping into the principal of its endowment for the last three years to make ends meet. The endowment, once \$120,000, has been cut in half, Borders said.

She raised a distress signal at the beginning of the year, announcing at a board meeting that the library would shut at year's end if it didn't cobble together \$30,000.

Donations from across the country poured in, knocking \$10,000 off the top. The library saved \$10,000 more by trimming staff hours, forgoing

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book purchases, and eliminating arts-and-crafts supplies for children's story time.

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Borders seems optimistic that with more money from the borough, the state cuts won't hurt much.

"With the borough stepping up, we'll actually have a better budget in 2010 than we have in years," she said.

As borough officials begin to hash out the budget, Davis said she hoped they would find a way to balance the needs of the library and those of beleaguered taxpayers.

But no matter what, the library will be funded, she said.

"People were hollering about [the library]," Davis said. "We'll have to find a way to fund this library."

Contact staff writer Joelle Farrell at 610-627-0352 or jfarrell@phillynews.com.

Published Nov. 30, 2009






BJ By Joelle Farrell, Inquirer Staff Writer

Editor's Note

The Inquirer does not host comments on most stories. [Here's why.](#)

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Historic Darby Free Library struggling to keep it together

In the cramped main room of the historic Darby Free Library, outdated electrical wiring prevents the air-conditioning from running at the same time as the printers.

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The Darby Free Library, founded in 1743, at its current home, dating to 1872.

RON TARVER / Staff Photographer

by Laura McCrystal, Inquirer Staff Writer

Published Sep 14, 2014

In the cramped main room of the historic Darby Free Library, outdated electrical wiring prevents the air-conditioning from running at the same time as the printers.

Cracks show in the ceiling of the brick building, which dates to 1872. Residents crowd the library, waiting as long as two hours for access to one of five computers.

Founded by a group of Quakers in 1743, the Darby Free Library is the oldest continuously operating public library in the United States, as best as the state Department of Education can determine. The department is responsible for library funding.

Now, as library services might be needed more than ever in the financially struggling Delaware County borough, it is fighting to make ends meet.

“In order to function as a proper library and support the community as we should, we don’t have enough funds,” said librarian Sue Borders.

Borders, Darby’s librarian for 25 years, has managed to keep the library operating with limited resources.

Jay McCalla, the new president of the library’s board, said it could soon run out of money.

Although it receives funding from the borough and the state, the Darby Library Company operates as its own nonprofit.

It confronted possible closure in 2009 with a decrease in state funding, but remained open after the borough council voted to double the amount it gives to the library each year.

The borough of about 11,000 already has a tight budget. Darby's median household income is under \$34,000, and almost 30 percent of its residents live below the federal poverty level, according to the most recent Census Bureau figures.

Mayor Helen Thomas said those economic realities make it difficult to raise taxes - already among the highest in the region - but they also make the library an especially important resource.

"A lot of our residents don't have computers and things like that," Thomas said. "We are a very low-income borough."

The library has about 1,500 visits each month, and circulation has increased in recent years. Residents use the library computers to apply for jobs or complete homework assignments.

The 2014 budget called for \$80,591 in expenditures, with about \$60,000 of that for salaries for the five part-time staffers and just under \$8,000 for books.

Meanwhile, the board has been unable to make much-needed repairs, and McCalla said he plans to ask the borough, its prime funding source, to double its \$42,000 annual contribution. That \$42,000 figure is double what it was five years ago.

Thomas said that she was open to helping the library but that she would need to discuss the issue with borough council members.

Libraries in Delaware County receive their state support through the county's library system, and director David Belanger said annual statewide funding has fallen to \$2.2 million, a one-third decrease since 2008.

"All the libraries struggle to make ends meet, but Darby is probably the most precarious because they have a community with high need and limited funding support," Belanger said.

To reduce costs, Borders said, the library has cut staff hours. Borders herself works part time at the library, splitting her time between Darby and the Sharon Hill Library.

The Darby library has, at times, taken as much as \$20,000 a year from its investment income to make ends meet. "We wouldn't be sustainable in the long run," Borders said.

The 19th-century, two-story brick structure has cracks and damaged walls. Its torn carpeting needs to be replaced. So do the drafty windows.

The library needs to make an elevator handicapped-accessible. Currently, steep steps lead to the second floor, which has the book collection, computers, and main desk.

McCalla, who grew up in Darby and has worked as a deputy managing director under Philadelphia Mayor John F. Street, joined the library's board earlier this year. He has a vision of updating the building, providing more computers for public use and increasing programs for residents. He would like to improve the display for the original library collection of 43 volumes from 1743, now held in a bookcase mounted on the wall.

First, he will need to address the library's basic needs. Maintaining an old, historical building in a poor community is "a deadly combination," he said.

Libraries across the country are turning to grants, fund-raising, and other revenue sources to maintain services, said Sari Feldman, of the American Library Association.

"We don't want to charge for library service," she said, "but we are in a complex financial environment and we are looking for opportunities to bring dollars to our libraries."

McCalla said he hopes the Darby library's status as the oldest public library in the country will improve its chances of receiving support.

"We're going to keep our library," said Thomas, the mayor, whose own four children grew up visiting the small brick building. "We just have to find a way, and that's it."