



# West Milford Township Library

Press release

The following letter regarding plans for a new library was presented at the Sept. 9 Council meeting.

TO: West Milford Township Council

FROM: Douglas Ott, Library Board President

RE: Potential Real Estate Acquisition

Dear Council members,

As you know, the library board has spent over a decade searching for a prime location for the much-needed new library. Over the last several months, we've been investigating multiple new possibilities for achieving this township goal. In discussing various options, the library board recently focused on innovative ways to meet the library's needs while simultaneously addressing the current and future needs of the township as a whole. The board has also been committed to building the new library without any additional taxes, by means of private donations, the use of existing savings, and independent fundraising activities.

We have been very diligent and have made significant progress. Keeping in mind that there will be no additional cost to the taxpayers of West Milford, we are pleased to present the following details of our long range plan:

- We will purchase the property adjacent to the municipal complex, (the Finn property, 1470 Union Valley Road, Block 7903, lot 13) using library funds.
- We will construct a new library facility and community center that will meet State standards while servicing the needs of our residents of all ages using library funds.
- This will facilitate the expansion of the municipal complex by about 25% in total area.
- There is no negative impact on the municipal complex whatsoever.
- We will donate the existing library building, land and parking area to the township for their use in order to expand facilities for Township services and for better ADA compliance.

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- This donation, estimated at a value of \$2 million, will engender current municipal expansion opportunities through township use of the existing library building & parking lot.
- There will now be future municipal expansion opportunities on the upper lot previously considered as a potential location for library use.
- We will donate the library board's purchased rights to the Wallisch Estates, providing the township with clear title & use.

We are not seeking any expenditure of funding by the township. We are merely seeking authorization to execute a contract with the seller, to be fully funded utilizing library resources.

The library board is excited to present plans that will benefit the library and more importantly, the entire township, at no additional cost. We will be conducting multiple town meetings in the near future so that the public can provide input for our strategic planning process.

Additionally, over the course of the past few months, the Library Board has discussed with the Town Council the possibility of returning some of our savings to the taxpayers, in order to reduce the tax burden. Subsequently, officials of the State Library were contacted by several board members as well as by our auditor. Ultimately, the law specifies that only libraries meeting or exceeding State standards with sufficient reserves to meet future financial obligations and operating costs may obtain authorization to return unused funds to the municipality. Our existing library is extremely undersized and does not currently meet State standards. Indeed, the present library building has only one third of the space needed to meet the standards for books and media collections, with very limited seating space, children's activities space, computer area, and room to hold meetings and presentations.

In summary, as a result of the joint efforts of the Library Board and the Township Council, the community will gain:

- ✓ A brand new library with expanded facilities
- ✓ The Township's ability to expand its offices on the municipal complex making them fully ADA compliant
- ✓ The Township's ability to potentially use the Wallisch property for additional ball fields and other sports or environmentally friendly venues
- ✓ Two million dollars in existing assets will be donated to the township while simultaneously achieving the goal of a new larger library.

All of the above is at no additional cost to the taxpayers. Finally, this parcel represents the last and only opportunity for the expansion of West Milford's municipal complex. The library board is truly excited to present these plans and be an integral part of this historic event.