

RYE PUBLIC LIBRARY

New Hampshire

581 WASHINGTON RD. RYE, N.H. 03870 - (603) 964-8401 FAX 964-7065

November 21, 2017

BY HAND
Rye Board of Selectmen
Rye Town Hall
10 Central Road
Rye, NH 03870

Dear Sirs/Madam:

Further to the Rye Public Library (RPL) budget which was tabled at your November 13, 2017 meeting and your consideration of a revised RPL budget at the November 27, 2017 meeting of the Board of Selectmen (BOS), I submit the following: The RPL Board of Trustees is elected by the citizens of Rye to oversee the affairs of the Library, including its finances, personnel practices, compensation programs, and operations. Each member of the Board takes an oath of office to be responsible to all the citizens, not just to the Selectmen. Members of the BOS are only authorized to recommend RPL's total, bottom-line budget and do not have line-by-line control. Formulating the Library's budget is the duty and responsibility of the RPL Trustees. The Trustees spend part of every monthly meeting reviewing the Library's financial reports and examining compliance with the approved budget.

After meeting with the Selectmen on November 13, the Trustees further reviewed the Thornton & Associates "Wage Survey and Compensation Study Project Report" prepared for RPL, as well as the Thornton & Associates "Wage Survey and Compensation Study Non-Union Positions Project Report" prepared for the BOS regarding 19 Town employees. Contrary to what we heard from the BOS at that meeting, the data show that a majority of those 19 Town employees are compensated at or above the seventy-fifth percentile of all survey participants. In light of this, RPL Trustees being taken to task (not to mention the manner in which it was done) for the level of its employees' compensation is both puzzling and troubling.

The comparison data are important, but community size is only part of compensation considerations. The cost of living in Rye and the expectations of Library patrons regarding quality and level of service are vital pieces of the RPL Board's consideration of a fair employee compensation policy. RPL has much higher participation levels than many towns with a larger population. It should be noted that two of the nine RPL positions are combined positions with dual responsibilities, making comparison with other single-role library positions imprecise. The skills needed to fulfill these dual positions warrant a higher rate of pay. As Trustees, we take our fiduciary duty to the taxpayers and library patrons to heart every day.

Our philosophy for the staffing the Rye Public Library in creating a professional and up-to-date compensation program is to retain and reward our highly trained staff, and when vacancies

occur, to recruit well-qualified candidates with new skills and relationships willing to share their knowledge with us. We do this in two ways. First, by fairly compensating our staff at the levels we do, we keep a small edge in the areas of retention and recruitment. Second, by continuing to conduct thorough and meaningful annual reviews of all our professional staff, we provide both guidance and incentive for improvement.

We are fortunate to have an astute Director who has had the foresight to cross-train employees so that in the event of sudden staff departure or sickness, we are able to prevent a loss in services for our patrons. This was demonstrated after Tricia Quinn's sudden passing. Her responsibilities as Associate Director and desk coverage were shifted and shared among five different employees. Eliminating the position of Associate Director, reassigning those duties to an Assistant Director, and creating a combined position resulted in a salary increase for one incumbent employee. It was necessary to increase the hours of three other part-time employees to accommodate the open hours of the library.

This is the kind of expertise we want to keep at the RPL and to reward, if earned, as judged by an annual performance-based review, with a performance-based increase in pay. The review must have the potential for an increase tied to it in order for a true performance-based program to be successful. This is precisely what has been researched and recommended in the professional review done by Thornton & Associates. And in fact, the Thornton studies and reports done for both the Town BOS and the RPL, show that many libraries and many non-library town staffs of the communities in the surveyed cohorts use a performance-based or merit-based compensation system.

In the budget submission before you, we have reduced our total salary line by \$6,294 to reflect a 1.5% pool to be made available for increases, where deserved, in performance-based increases in pay, instead of the 3% that was included in the previous submission. This is in direct response to the selectmen's concern regarding the introduction of a performance-based increase in salary without a more formal articulation of such a compensation program in place at this time. The Trustees reflected on Selectman Jenness' counsel to use this coming year to prove the concept of the performance increase, and decided to move forward with this logical suggestion. This 1.5% equals \$5,637.

We wish to be very clear that this pool of money has never been intended to be used for an across-the-board 1.5% pay increase. Those who have earned it by performing above expectations will get it - and those employees who have not, will not.

Starting immediately after the holidays, the Board plans to formalize and articulate RPL's compensation program and to invite members of the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee to participate in this process.

The Trustees of the Rye Public Library are unanimous in our belief that a performance-based compensation program is the most fiscally responsible tool to attract and retain quality employees. We, as an elected Board, continually strive to provide the best services to the people of the Town of Rye, who elected us. We believe that our proposed interim 1.5% performance-based compensation program that includes a 1.5% pool for those worthy of performance-based rewards shows our commitment to our continued stewardship of the finances and trust of Rye's citizens.

Thank you, and we ask that you approve the RPL budget request of \$655,289.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Oliver". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

Karen W. Oliver, Chair
Rye Public Library Board of Trustees