

TO: Town of Richmond Selectboard

FROM: Richmond Free Library Trustees

DATE: March 4, 2024

RE: Approval to apply for Vermont Department of Libraries grant funding

The Vermont Department of Libraries is administering two federal capital project grant opportunities for public libraries in Vermont. We intend to apply for both programs, based on the advisory from the Vermont Department of Libraries (see at the end). We completed the required needs assessment for both of these grants last summer, the application process and intended proposals are described below.

\$16.4M U.S. Treasury Capital Projects Fund for Libraries – Due March 12

The American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) [Capital Projects Funds](#) provides \$10 billion for payments to eligible governments to carry out critical capital projects in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. **Through this program, the Department of Libraries will administer \$16.4 million in Capital Project funds toward capital improvements to Vermont’s public libraries.**

Goal: To address critical building improvements to ensure Vermonters have continued access to high-speed Internet to directly enable work, education, and health monitoring at their local public libraries.

Timeline:

- **January 30, 2024:** Application Launch Webinar – Laurie attended
- **January 30, 2024 through March 12, 2024:** Grant Application for the U.S. Treasury Capital Projects Fund for Libraries is open
- **Late Spring/Early Summer 2024:** Grant Awards will be made in the Spring of 2024
- **December 31, 2026:** End of the period of performance for all U.S. Treasury Capital Project Funds

Proposed Grant Funding Request:

Based on the goal of this funding -- to address public access to libraries, we propose 2 projects to improve access to the build and make access and egress safer in the event of an emergency requiring evacuation of the Library building.

- 1) **Moving/redesign of the handicap ramp.** Currently there are 2 handicap parking spaces adjacent to a slanted sidewalk into the building. These parking spaces represent a safety risk as they require backing into traffic on Bridge Street to get out. In addition, for any more than 2 cars, ramp access to the parking lot requires walking across the parking lot to the sidewalk, then up the sidewalk to the handicap ramp. This change would move the handicap ramp access into the parking lot, next to the stairs. The ramp would be easily accessible to more than just the two parking spots on Bridge Street. The new ramp would be adjacent to the full parking lot and could then be used by anyone with mobility issues, parents with strollers or small children and people bringing things into the building for programs. The estimated cost for this project is \$115,000. ****NOTE:** This is part of the larger Town Center Renovation Site Plan – costs were pulled from that estimate.
- 2) **Rebuild the front stairs** which are the second means of egress required by fire codes for both community room and first floor of library as well as an historical element of the building

design. The stairs have been repaired numerous times and continue to deteriorate. They currently do not meet code. Because the existing stairs are built on rubble with no foundation, we will need to engage an engineer to create a rebuild plan. We have an estimate of \$60,000-\$80,000 to rebuild them to meet historic preservation guidelines, this would include engineering. We would like to request the full \$80,000 which would include both cost of engineering work and rebuild.

We feel that these two projects fit within the parameters of the purpose of the grant which is to ensure that the public has easy access to the library and their high-speed internet services as well as the public computers, fax, copier and technical assistance provided by staff.

Second (Upcoming) Grant Opportunity:

\$10M Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grants – deadline Fall/Winter 2024

The Vermont Department of Libraries' \$10M for Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grants for small, rural public libraries in Vermont is administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through their FY2023 Economic Initiative Community Project Funding program. This funding was made possible by the support of Senator Leahy, who included the Department's proposal in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023.

The Department's grant application for these funds will be open to all **rural** and **small** public libraries in Vermont with the exception of public libraries that received specific, individual earmarks for support through the Congressionally Directed Spending process.

Goal: To provide resources to address repair and mitigation needs in small, rural public libraries that also serve as community meeting spaces and public facilities, with **a focus on economically depressed areas.**

Timeline:

- **Fall 2024:** The Department will launch the competitive grant application with a webinar
- **Fall/Winter 2024:** The application for Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grants opens
- **Spring 2025:** Grant Awards will be made
- **August 31, 2031:** End of the period of performance for all FY2023 Community Project Fund grants

Library Trustees Plan

The Library Trustees plan to apply for funding to repair the roof of the Library building through this grant opportunity. However, the focus on small, rural libraries, means that we may not be funded. The repair project on the slate steeple and broad roof cost estimate is \$110,000 (a full replacement would cost \$235,000) based on an estimate received in October 2023.

Vermont Department of Libraries Advisory

The Department recommends that every public library apply for all grant funding for which it is eligible. That said, these will be competitive grants that will enable *some* public libraries to complete capital projects. However, the funding does not fully meet the significant need for capital projects funding in all of Vermont's 187 public libraries. The Department aims to support libraries across Vermont and anticipates making awards to at least one public library in each of Vermont's 14 counties through these two programs.

If your capital project fits within the parameters of *both* the **U.S. Treasury Capital Projects Fund for Libraries** and **Public Facilities Preservation Initiative Grants**, then the Department recommends that you apply for both grant opportunities.