

December 5, 2019

Lauren Moore, New York State Librarian  
New York State Library  
Cultural Education Center  
222 Madison Avenue  
Albany, NY 12230

Dear Ms. Moore,

The James Prendergast Library Board of Trustees respectfully requests your full consideration in approving the 2019 waiver application to restore State Aid to the library. This waiver is crucial to maintain current essential library services in our community, which serve to enhance the Chautauqua Cattaraugus Library System's services since we serve as the System's Co-Central Library along with the Olean Public Library. The City of Jamestown cut the library's funding from \$350,000 in 2016 to \$100,000 in 2017 and then reduced it further to \$50,000 in 2018 and 2019. In the face of these cuts, the library has reduced costs significantly to continue providing valuable and necessary library services to our financially struggling community.

The City of Jamestown had reached its constitutional tax limit until the November 25, 2019 City Council Meeting when the council approved the 2020 budget with a 16 cent tax rate decrease. The tax rate in the proposed budget was going to remain constant at \$23.85 per \$1,000 assessed property value in 2020. However, city officials determined that in 2020, the city will save \$150,000 in health related benefits for the retirees and current city employees enrolled in the city's health care plan. The council voted to use \$110,000 of the \$150,000 savings toward decreasing the tax rate. The remaining \$40,000 was voted to fund the library which is in addition to the \$60,000 already allocated to the library, for a total of \$100,000 of tax support for the James Prendergast Library in 2020.

The James Prendergast Library's Board of Trustees is fully committed to work hard to obtain sustainable funding for the library. Several board members attended the November 25, 2019 City Council Meeting to encourage the council to increase library funding – they were successful. Each board member goes above and beyond to advocate for the library and the wide variety of resources provided to the community.

The Board of Trustees will build a plan with the staff and the Chautauqua Cattaraugus Library System's ED that strives to engage all the residents of Jamestown and the surrounding municipalities that already support the library so they can reach out to their friends, acquaintances and relatives to encourage them to vote for the initiative. This can happen through neighborhood groups, education groups, humanities and cultural groups, service groups, etc. We need to build a community of supporters that feel welcome and needed.

Below are commitment statements from each board member:

Joni Blackman, President, Board of Trustees:

"I wholeheartedly believe the Library is necessary for the under-served and hard working poor families that dominate Jamestown. Jamestown is labeled impoverished by NYS, and the Library is one place they can come to get help, learn and eventually thrive. The residents of Jamestown, no matter their financial situation, can help the entire City by voting for the tax initiative at \$0.23/thousand."

Lynn Warner, Vice President, Board of Trustees:

"I have been a library patron all of my life, and over the years I have lived in many cities and towns throughout the eastern United States. Whenever my family relocated, one of the first things I did was to obtain library cards for my children and myself. There is no better place to learn about a community than at its local library. Libraries are the life blood of every community, providing learning opportunities, empowering creativity and, in the case of the city of Jamestown, providing a safe haven for many members of our community who have nowhere else to turn. From the Makers Space to the tax assistance program to computer classes and the digital and traditional collection of materials, all ages within our community can find help, educational opportunities and entertainment at the James Prendergast Library. During our wicked winters, the library is a warm place to get out of the cold for those who have nowhere else to turn. I cannot in good conscience stand by and watch this cornerstone of our city close its doors through no fault of its own. I will continue to serve the library to the best of my ability by being a champion for it and by being a voice for those who need the library and its services the most."

Michelle McCray, Secretary, Board of Trustees:

"As part of a family whose members have accessed all the James Prendergast Library has to offer for close to 90 years (5 generations!), I feel it is my duty as both a community member and a Board Trustee to help preserve this local treasure. While the way we use the Library has changed greatly over the years, the contribution to our society has not and as a Board Trustee, I will do all I can to keep us viable far into the future."

Michael Corey, Trustee:

"I have been using the James Prendergast Library for over 60 years! It is a primary lifeblood of the Jamestown community and often a lifeline to its citizens. As a Board Trustee I cannot sit idly by and see this asset to our city further reduce the services it provides, or perhaps even be forced to close its doors. I will be reaching out to everyone I know in an effort to increase the support level of community members, organizations and local government."

Ned Lindstrom, Trustee:

"As an advocate for people seeking to recover their lives one can see the need for a safe place where many go to learn to read, take classes, prepare for careers, apply for jobs, learn computer skills, and stay away from unhealthy environments. For many, especially those without reliable transportation, or other resources, the library is the only place to get these services."

Maggie Scorse, Trustee:

"I believe the Library is one of the biggest gems that the City of Jamestown possesses. Our Library serves all residents, but in my mind, its most important role is serving the under-privileged residents of the City. It is a safe place for youth to come and the Library's programs help to educate these who otherwise might fall through the cracks. I am an advocate for the senior citizens of our City and its surrounding areas, and I know how important the Library is for these folks as well with programs and events geared toward seniors. Additionally, I believe that seniors probably borrow more books than most other age groups. For less than \$1.00 a month a home owner in the Jamestown School District who owns property assessed at \$50,000 can help save our Library and its programs that are so desperately needed in an impoverished City such as Jamestown. Where else can a person get that kind of value for \$1.00 a month?"



Dan Hickman, Trustee:

"I grew up in Jamestown and spent many hours at the library. My children have benefited from this library and now my nine-year-old niece, newly relocated from Texas has her first library card, courtesy of the Prendergast Library. I reached out to the library to become a board member because I feel that one key to a thriving community is to have a strong library. I can't imagine lives improving in our city without the benefits that Prendergast Library brings. My goal as a Trustee is to provide as much information as possible to the community in order that they fully understand how important the vote is to our survival. I do like the idea of forming a committee to monitor the Compliance Plan implementation and would be willing to sit on that committee as needed."

Robert Hewitt, Trustee:

"The James Prendergast Library is first and foremost a community center. Although the library is open to all those who wish to enter, it supports at risk communities unlike any other community provider. The vitality and stability of the greater Jamestown community is intrinsically linked with the library's success. I will work to facilitate community discussions and work to ensure information presented the library presents accurate information to the public."

Lori Fabritius, Trustee:

I moved around a lot when I was a child. I lived in Fredonia, NY, Mahwah, NJ, and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It was difficult to sometimes make friends so I read books at my library wherever I lived. Going to a library was a safe place where I could ramble among the bookshelves looking for a special book to take home and read. I especially liked reading books where I could relate to the main character in the story. Many years when I was a graduate student, I took out materials from the JPL for some of my research essays. The staff were always very helpful. I live in Sinclairville, and my babysitter would take my sons to the Prendergast library as a special treat. My children loved going to story hour. Going to the library helped them to be great readers. My youngest son read about 50 books a year for pleasure while he is pursuing his PhD. I will fight for the 259 vote because as an educator and disability resource coordinator I feel that the JP Library is a special place for those who need this special place. The library is truly a jewel for all of the community members it serves.

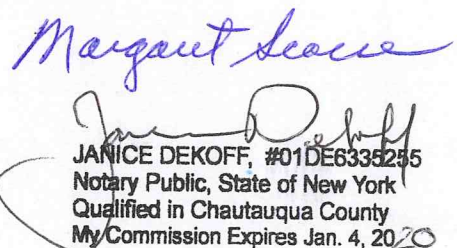
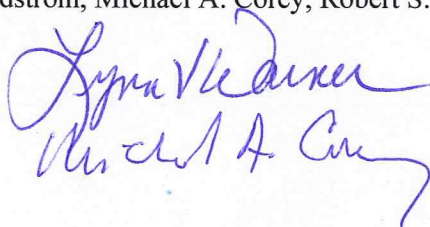
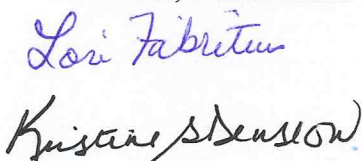
The Board of Trustees is committed to supporting this vital community resource. We will set up a 2-person committee to monitor the monthly implementation of the 3-year Compliance Plan with a report at each board meeting. The meeting minutes and all other documentation requested from the New York State Library can be found on the James Prendergast Library's website at [www.prendergastlibrary.org/funding/](http://www.prendergastlibrary.org/funding/). This webpage is updated regularly with accurate information for the community about the library's funding situation and initiative.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. The library has served the community for over 125 years and will continue to work hard to meet community needs and obtain sustainable funding.

Sincerely,



James Prendergast Library Board of Trustees: Joni Blackman, Lynn Warner, Kris Denslow, Micki McCray, Maggie Scorse, Ned Lindstrom, Michael A. Corey, Robert S. Hewitt, Frank Corapi, Lori Fabritius, Dan Hickman



JANICE DEKOFF, #01DE6335255  
Notary Public, State of New York  
Qualified in Chautauqua County  
My Commission Expires Jan. 4, 2020