



BLACKSTONE BUILDING BULLETIN

Keeping Branford's Historic Library Beautiful

Welcome to our first community update on what we are doing to ensure the evolution and upkeep of our building and grounds. In 1896, the James Blackstone Memorial Library (Blackstone) was conceived as playing a role central to "village life." Today, Blackstone remains a community hub; an architectural icon that sits on an extraordinary park-like property in the center of Branford. The library's programs and services aim to help everyone in the Branford community learn, succeed, and thrive in life. In the same way that Blackstone evolves its offerings to be in alignment with the changing dynamics of our community and needs of our patrons, both the Library and the Town are committed to improving the library's physical spaces in ways that embrace modernity while preserving the architectural beauty of this historic building.

The Building and Grounds committee includes representatives from the Board of Trustees, community volunteers with specific relevant interest and knowledge, and the Branford Town Engineer. The committee works with Library Staff on important projects that are outside the scope of routine maintenance that require engaging professionals with specific areas of expertise. Support provided includes helping with RFQs (Requests for Qualifications), RFPs (Requests for Proposals), and vendor interviewing and selection. The collaboration between Blackstone staff, Trustees, and Branford Town representatives is critical to making thoughtful, sound decisions that serve the best interests of the Branford community at large. When significant Town funds are involved (as was the case for the 2018 renovation), the Town becomes more heavily involved, overseeing the bid process, architectural and engineering phase, and construction phase.

TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS, TWO NEW SMALL CONFERENCE ROOMS ARE COMING

The Library conducted a community-needs study in 2021 as part of developing a new strategic plan. A clear need for flexible meeting spaces as well as spaces to gather for a variety of group sizes emerged from that community outreach. The Library's existing meeting rooms are in high demand; the existing two medium-sized meeting rooms are in use every day, all day long, and the auditorium is in near-constant use for library programs.

Enclosing the auditorium's interior balcony to create additional conference room space was originally an "add-alternate" project as part of the Library's 2018 building renovation project. That part of the renovation was not implemented because of a lack of funding. Through diligent efforts of the Library Director, we were able to secure Connecticut Library State funds to enclose the balcony and create two additional conference rooms. After a thorough Invitation to Bid process, the architectural firm of Lothrop Associates was awarded the contract. Under their guidance we have begun the work needed to ensure the glass enclosure will (1) satisfy the concerns of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and (2) be structurally sound.

STAY TUNED FOR FURTHER UPDATES ON THIS MUCH NEEDED, LONG AWAITED RENOVATION PROJECT!

Engaging Community. Expanding Minds. Enriching Lives.





AFTER 130 YEARS, TIME FOR A FACILITIES ASSESSMENT AND MULTI-PHASE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Both the Library and the Town of Branford are committed to navigating the maintenance challenges associated with the care of our iconic, 129-year-old historic building. Over the years, it has been necessary to defer some maintenance issues, with many repairs being made in response to an immediate need. A consensus was reached with the Town that a comprehensive Facilities Building Condition Assessment Study is needed to help the Town and Library develop financial plans for required short- and long-term projects. High priority issues for the study include water infiltration into the building, air quality, and any possible hazardous conditions.

This summer, the library, working together with the Town, issued an RFQ to conduct a Facilities Building Condition Assessment (Study) to determine the condition of the Library, and propose specific maintenance projects needed to ensure the upkeep of historical portions of the library, renovated areas, and underlying infrastructure systems. The chosen firm must demonstrate they have the capability and capacity to work closely with Library personnel and the Building and Grounds committee, as well as with Branford Town departments.

Twelve firms submitted responses. Using the rubric below, each firm was rated on specific criteria. The top 3 firms were asked to prepare presentations for an interview committee consisting of Board of Trustee members, Building and Grounds Committee members, and Town representatives.

Evaluation Criteria Rubric:

Understanding of scope of work and services needed as reflected by quality of response.

Qualifications and relevant experience of key personnel and any sub-consultants or subcontractors to be assigned to this contract.

Demonstrated effectiveness in delivering quality

service and timely execution/completion of project timelines.

Presentation of thorough proposed timeline.

Track record of successful past projects for libraries and other institutions of learning, as well as working with municipalities.

Experience with historical buildings.

Expertise (in-house or with contractors/sub-contractors) in remediating water infiltration, abatement and HVAC issues.

Required licenses and insurance.

Reference List provided of past clients.

The scope of the consulting services provided by the selected firm will include a thorough evaluation and inspection by the firm's staff including architects, engineers and consultants to determine the physical condition of the building, infrastructure systems, air quality, potential hazards, etc. The specific deliverable will be a report that will identify ongoing maintenance policies, and procedures which could be improved or implemented to avoid or reduce current or future capital costs. It shall also present a comprehensive study of the physical condition of the Library building and cost of repairs and code compliance along with prioritization of all needed repairs. Any needed replacement of large cost items such as roofs over the next 15-year period shall be included.

STAY TUNED FOR UPDATES ON THE SELECTION PROCESS AND PROGRESS OF THE STUDY

Any questions you may have regarding updates contained in this BLACKSTONE BUILDING BULLETIN, please feel free to reach out to Katy McNicol, Library Director, at kmcnicol@blackstonelibrary.org.



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