



TO: Seth Libby, Chair, Bar Harbor Warrant Committee  
FROM: Matt DeLaney, Director, Jesup Memorial Library  
Ron Beard, Chair, Jesup Memorial Library Board of Directors  
  
DATE: February 21, 2024  
RE: Further consideration of the Jesup request for funding

Good morning, Seth.

We wanted an opportunity to share some further details supporting the request of the Jesup Memorial Library for an increase in the town's appropriation in 2024-25. We would be grateful if you would distribute this to members of the Warrant Committee.

Some background: In a recent post on Facebook, Council Member Kyle Shank provided an explanation of his reasoning to support the Jesup request of \$330,000. Below, we include the text of his post, and note his conclusion: **"The library, if funded at the requested level this year, would cost the median taxpayer about \$1.25 a week."**

A follow up post asked why the Jesup was seeking increased funding from the town, given its successful capital drive for preservation work on the existing library building and construction of an addition. We wanted to share the essence of our response to that question with members of the Warrant Committee.

We noted that the capital fund drive and construction was funded entirely through private donations and grants... nearly \$14 million dollars. We point out that the vast majority came from donors at every level who are also property taxpayers in Bar Harbor, clear evidence of support for the Jesup's value to our community. No local tax dollars were provided to support these capital expenditures.

Next, we referred the citizen to our fall 2023 report on operations and comparison to other Maine libraries... warrant committee members may already be familiar with that report:

[www.jesuplibrary.org/study-group-report](http://www.jesuplibrary.org/study-group-report)

This report indicates that Jesup is one of the lowest publicly-funded libraries in Maine when compared to similarly sized libraries. Although this is not a new problem for our library, the rate of inflation and cost of living in Bar Harbor has added urgency to our present request to the town.

As you will know from your subcommittee report, our request for an increase of \$50,000 in this year's Town budget represents the amount needed to maintain current operations. Over the past 5 years, compounding inflation has added over \$150,000 to our operating costs and the increased cost of health benefits has added \$75,000 to our budget. The library, which serves thousands of Bar Harbor residents year-round, is grappling with this reality and working to ensure services continue for our community.

As a public library, the Jesup doesn't charge fees or memberships; library cards and public programs are free. Like other Maine libraries, we are dependent on what we raise on our own, what we draw from endowment and reserves, and support from the Town of Bar Harbor to deal with increased costs. The report notes that the Jesup raises a larger proportion of its operating support through private donations than almost any other library in Maine, and we have successfully increased our fundraising over the past several years.

But as with any economic enterprise, our costs for competitive but modest salaries and benefits have increased, accounting for 75% of our annual operating budget. After nearly a century with minimal municipal support, the Jesup has sought increases in town funding to assure that we keep pace. Without this additional support, the library will have to reduce staff and services in the coming years.

Finally, we note that the Jesup puts more money into the local economy than our appropriation from the town. In 2023, the Jesup received \$280,000 from the Town, but spent an additional \$408,000 in non-tax operating revenue to support its services.

We would be pleased to answer any additional questions about library operations and the rationale for our current request for town support.

One of us served for several years as a member of the warrant committee and subsequently as a member of the town council. But we both know the balancing act that you and your elected colleagues play: watching out for tax payers, at the same time assuring that our good community maintains community assets like the Jesup that contribute to the very real quality of life that our fellow citizens value.

We sincerely appreciate your consideration of the Jesup's request for town funding.

**Addendum: text of Facebook post by Kyle Shank  
February 19 at 9:06 PM**

Bar Harbor friends!

As this came up during our Budget workshop the other evening - and a lovely citizen reached out to ask me if I could follow up on my math - I'll share with you all the arithmetic that answers the burning question: "how much will it cost me, personally, if we fully fund the library's requested budget increase?"

(I know that maybe...3 people will care about this, but I'm sharing it anyway!)

1. Our 2025 estimated total commitment (i.e., the total amount we'd have to raise in property taxes to cover expenses/total appropriations, minus revenues) is \$26,702,333.
2. The Jesup, if funded at their full ask of \$330,00, would represent 1.2% of the total commitment (which would incidentally have to increase by \$169,320 to \$26,871,653 since the current budget proposal doesn't include the extra funds).
3. So, using the mill rate (\$10.35, which wouldn't change meaningfully with the additional money), the average total annual tax on the median home would be \$5,405.
4. 1.2% (\$330,000 / \$26.8M) of this would be for the library funding - or just about \$65 a year for the median home.
5. What we really wanted to know, however, was the taxpayer impact of the increase. We can get that by just using that incremental value above - In this case, the increased amount was \$169,320 - which is about 0.6% of the total budget. That value, using the math above, nets out to about \$34. Considering that the total tax increase this year is roughly \$871 for the average home, that's 3.9% of the total increase. So, put in different terms: the library, if funded at the requested level this year, would cost the median taxpayer about \$1.25 a week.