

Executive Summary

The Deborah Rawson Memorial Library's current mission is "to provide community access to information, ideas, and enriching experiences." The Library's vision is to grow "together as a community: a place to learn, to share, to create." Over the past two years, the Library has explored plans to expand the building with initial architectural drawings and community meetings. To prepare for a capital campaign to partially fund the expansion project, the Jericho Underhill Library District Board of Trustees (BOT) requested a feasibility study to test a specific fundraising goal for charitable donations that would offset the size of the necessary bond.

CPG Enterprises conducted an internal fundraising assessment of the Library in 2025, and an external assessment this spring, consisting of 19 confidential interviews. From our findings and the analysis of interviewee feedback, CPG Enterprises believes a \$2 million capital campaign goal is likely too high, and **we recommend that the Library postpone the project for at least one year.** We believe that a postponement will allow the Library time to significantly invest in public awareness, build the Library's donor base, and address the question of the two libraries in Jericho. Although we spoke with a relatively small number of people, their sentiments about a municipal bond suggest that a bond vote in 2027 might not pass. If the Library chooses to proceed with a capital campaign, we suggest a reduced fundraising goal of \$350,000 - \$500,000. Other possible alternatives for the project include a down-sized expansion or a phased approach.

While the Library is located in a wealthy area of Vermont, there are many factors constraining the goal and the project: little tradition of significant charitable giving to the Library; loose ties between Library leaders and the local philanthropic community; concerns about high and rising taxes; and general economic uncertainty. We were unable to identify a lead donor for the project; however, most interviewees expressed interest in supporting the project, and the total giving from this group of prospects might range from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

The overarching sentiment uncovered in our interviews is that the Deborah Rawson Memorial Library is a vital community resource, with well-loved spaces and programs for children, and well-used public meeting spaces. The Library is widely viewed as an important community asset in Underhill and Jericho. Despite these affirmations, nearly everyone felt that the expansion project was unlikely to be approved by voters, and many questioned the overall need. For some, the Library seems "new" and many remarked that the Library provides exceptional services and program space within its current footprint. Additionally, our fundraising assessment uncovered several areas in need of improvement including donor communications and relations, donation tracking systems, and other best practices for fundraising. CPG Enterprises recommends that Library staff and BOT take the time and effort to prepare themselves and the broader community for a campaign.

After reviewing the results of the Feasibility Study and considering the state of the economy, the BOT will explore scaling back the size of the library expansion project to reduce costs. The BOT will continue to actively gather ideas, input and feedback about the project from the community and will continue to disseminate information. The BOT will work more closely with potential key donors while continuing to grow the donor base. The project bond vote will likely be postponed until 2028.

We thank the 24 individuals who participated in the interviews for their valuable insight and feedback, and Library leaders for their helpful support in this process.