

Rockport is being inundated with commentary about our community library right now, and it's tempting to react to the loudest voices. I strongly urge our Select Board to let the democratic process play out so that *every* voter has a voice.

Some are calling for a "comprehensive survey" of the town. That's what the Library Committee proposes too. In a democracy, we are equipped to take regular such "surveys" - we call them votes. I cannot imagine that the Select Board might deny Rockport voters the right to officially voice their opinions on an issue that many feel passionately about. Though many have written letters to the editor or met privately with Select Board members, many more are patiently waiting for a vote they've never imagined they might be denied.

This evening, the Library Committee will present the Select Board with a proposed referendum giving Rockport voters the chance to vote for or against the construction of a new library on a portion of the RES site, provided that the current playing fields are preserved and pending community input on design and budget.

Some suggest that this vote is premature because it doesn't answer every question we have about the location or the library. However, many of those questions - especially the vitally important ones about financing - cannot be answered *without* this vote.

We cannot accurately assess our ability to fund construction through grants and private donations without an indication that the town supports construction on the RES site. If voters approve the measure, we will begin fundraising and we are committed to raising the majority of funds. That's how the library has always funded capital projects; every construction, renovation, and significant improvement in the Library's 100-year history has been funded *entirely* through private money. Some will try to scare voters with dire predictions of tax hikes, but the reality is that we are not asking voters for any funding at this point and cannot yet predict how much - if any - we might request.

We cannot develop a realistic architectural design without an indication that voters want to build it. Some may suggest that we'll return to the conceptual design developed through a grant from the Davis Community Foundation, but that's never been our intention. The purpose of that design was to show what might be possible and to draw attention to the library's future. (A goal we clearly accomplished, and then some.) With town approval of the site, we will start from scratch on building design that incorporates significant public input.

RES has been put forth as the best site for a new library for many reasons. I urge you to read (or re-read) the Steering Committee's report for a thorough analysis. Nonetheless, if voters reject that possibility, we will turn our attention to other sites. The point is that the decision belongs to our town. Rockport voters have a right to vote on this issue. Why wouldn't they?