



THE FREE LIBRARY
OF NEW HOPE & SOLEBURY

Update for the Solebury Board of Supervisors
16 February 2021

2020 Year-End Financial Status

- The Free Library operates on a cash basis.
- Receipts from operations for 2020 were \$272,043 (\$2,900 less than budgeted).
- Total expenses were \$287,535 (over budget by \$12,600), yielding an operating deficit against budget of \$15,500.
- However, among other more minor (and typical) eccentricities, we incurred a \$20,000 expense in 2020 for new bookcases in the children's library, while the offsetting income was recorded in 2019 at the time of its donation by the Friends of the Library.
- The Free Library balance sheet has \$170,449 in cash (enough for more than eight months' operations), and total assets of \$2,380,472 (including fixed assets, primarily the building).
- In an unusually good year for the markets generally, our endowment enjoyed a 14% rate of return in 2020, adding \$152,000 of unrealized gains to the balance sheet.



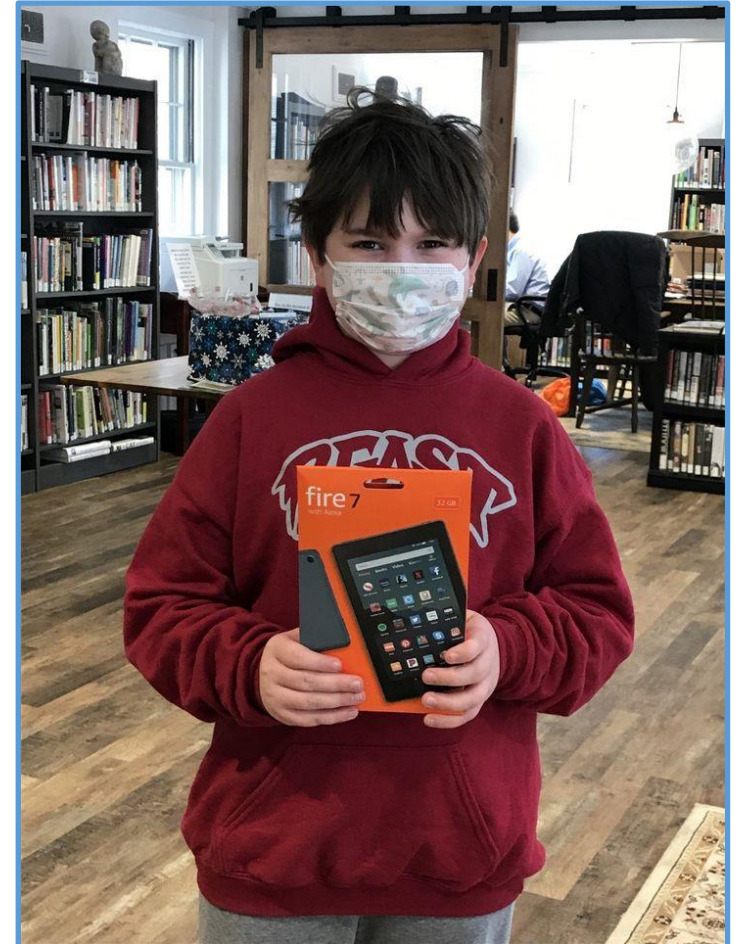
Recent Fundraising Status

- Contributions in response to our annual Spring and Fall appeals, plus contemporaneous undesignated cash donations, were \$52,742.44.
- Comparable donations in 2019 were \$50,534.97.
- Timing of the Fall appeal mailers was severely degraded by COVID-19 closures at the printer and delays (by almost two months) in regional bulk mail processing by the USPS.
- The (first and we hope only) virtual October Buzzathon was an unexpectedly successful stand-in for the Community Spelling Bee, bringing in more than \$6,000, including generous sponsorships from Addison Wolfe Real Estate, First National Bank & Trust of Newtown, McCaffrey's Food Markets and Penn Community Bank.
- The Free Library was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Norman Raab Foundation, earmarked for technology infrastructure upgrades.



Operational Status During the COVID-19 Surge

- Following Governor Wolf's request in November, the Free Library returned to curbside-only service November 30th.
- We resumed public access on February 9th, based on the decreasing COVID-19 case numbers provided by the Bucks County Department of Health and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- Note that we never fully closed and continued to provide patrons with curbside service, remote technical assistance, virtual programming, and readers' advisory services.
- Our staff of three full-time and two part-time library professionals worked regular hours throughout.
- We recently completed our 2021 Winter Reading Challenge, during which more than 100 local readers of all ages logged more than 45,000 reading minutes in a two-week period.
- Throughout 2020 and into 2021, our customer base has remained steady at approximately 70% Solebury residents and 30% New Hope residents.



“As the world shut down, the library continued to bring people together”

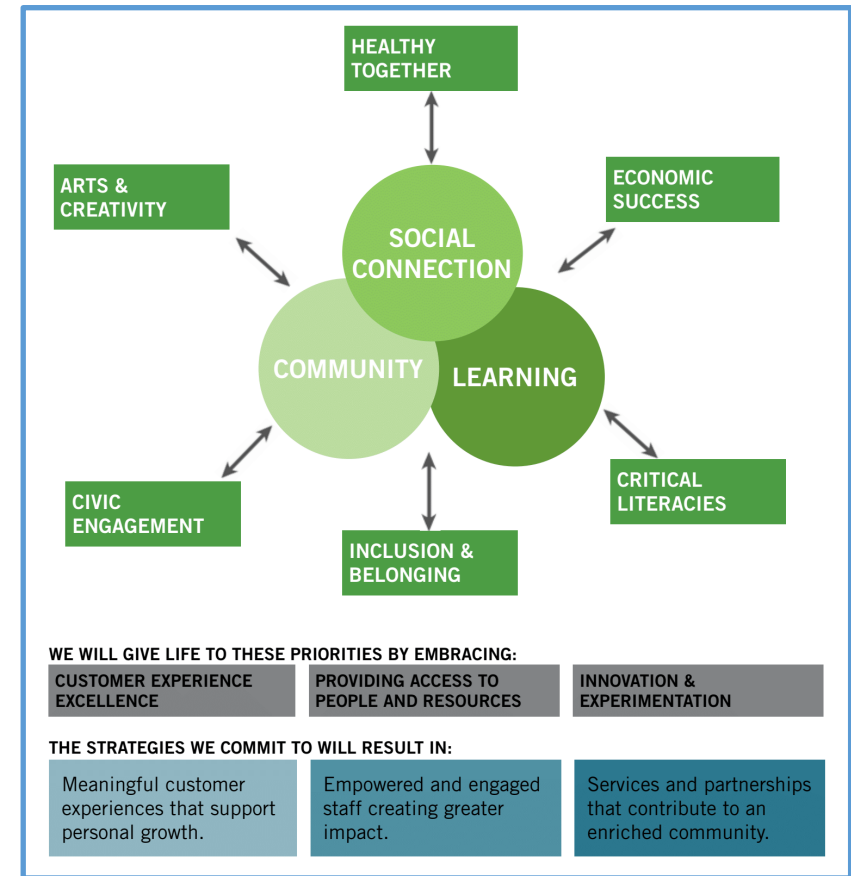
In 2020, the library did its part to sustain the fabric of our community:

- 3,930 children attended a virtual library program, including the annual summer reading program.
- 832 adults attended a virtual library program.
- Hundreds participated in virtual story times, book clubs, and art and yoga classes on Zoom.
- All ages enjoyed educational programming, including online S.T.E.A.M experiments, literary quiz nights, Introduction to Beekeeping classes, and visits with historical personalities, such as the Ladies of Suffrage.
- Special online holiday programming was highlighted by virtual visits with “Gool-ia” Child for Halloween recipes and Santa Claus for local children to share their dreams for Christmas.
- E-circulation rose dramatically to 21,017, with continuous email and phone support from library.



FLNHS Strategic Plan Overhaul

- The Free Library’s strategic plan has not undergone a substantial update since 2016.
- The Board of Trustees’ Development Committee has begun a complete overhaul with an eye toward completion later this year.
- Currently, the committee is studying the widely circulated, open-ended planning model adopted by the Salt Lake City, Utah, public library, as we begin to imagine the Free Library as it ought to be in the next ten or twenty years, more rather than less focused on electronic media and delivery, digital services and programming, and customer relationships in an increasingly virtual world.
- The “Salt Lake City” planning model places heavy emphasis on Strategic Roadmap Navigation Teams, Community Focus Groups and Contributor Teams, and Community Stakeholder participation . . . And in that regard, as our largest stakeholder, the Solebury Supervisors will be engaged early in the process.



Items for Further Discussion and Collaboration

- Let us address ourselves to designing a process for selection of future Township representatives on the library board (as present representatives Joanne Reszka and Mike McKenna will eventually leave the board in the normal course of their service).
- Perhaps a working group, including members of the library's Governance Committee, can be formed to devise a repeatable nomination process, providing future Solebury Supervisors, Borough Councils, and library trustees a consistent roadmap.
- What is the future of the present library building?
- Is it feasible to include any potential new library planning in Solebury's development plans, for example as a part of future development of the property on US 202 adjacent to the New Hope Star Diner?

