



**TOWN OF KITTERY**  
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**REPORT TO TOWN COUNCIL**

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Meeting Date: August 14, 2017  
From: Rice Library Working Group  
Subject: Working Group Update  
Councilor Sponsor: Jeff Pelletier, Judy Spiller

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**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

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**BACKGROUND**

The Rice Library Working Group (RLWG) was formed out of a belief that broad resident participation was crucial to resolving the debate over the Rice Public Library's future. After years of review and debate, this group felt it was necessary to find a way forward. While representing key stakeholder groups, the RLWG has no formal charge from those groups.

The RLWG includes members from the Rice Library Board of Directors, members of the Town Council, representatives from the Kittery Community Center, at-large public members, the Town Manager and Library Director. This broad representation of perspectives has led to a rich dialogue and collaborative approach to the effort.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The RLWG began meeting in January and focused on developing a process that would identify a "preferred" location for the Rice Library. The process was focused on obtaining a preference that was wholly public driven. The RLWG agreed to pursue this process with neutrality and commitment to the outcome.

RLWG developed a multi-phase public input process that included two Saturday workshops in the spring, a month-long public survey, and information tables at the June election and Kittery Block Party. This work was intended to help guide the development of a non-binding referendum question for the November 2017 ballot. At each workshop, on the survey, and at the election and Block Party the same information was presented, and the same questions were asked of participants.

The RLWG presented the public with four options for the Rice Public Library future. Each option was presented with pros and cons developed by the RLWG. The options included:

- **OPTION 1: Maintain Rice and Taylor Buildings:** Rice Public Library continues to operate out of both buildings.
- **OPTION 2: Rehabilitate Rice Building with an Addition:** Rice Building will be updated with a newly constructed addition.
- **OPTION 3: New Rice Library at the Kittery Community Center:** New library constructed directly adjacent to Rogers Road on the Kittery Community Center grounds.
- **OPTION 4: Other:** Options suggested by the public that have not yet been considered.

Each option was presented in the context of the primary attributes of a 21<sup>st</sup> century library identified by the 2016 Library Committee's Report to Council and included:

- Accessibility for all visitors/ADA accessibility
- Space for children, young adult, and adult programs
- Community meeting and program space
- Technology to meet the evolving needs for information access
- Adjacency to the town's various populations and neighborhoods
- Overall fit within the neighborhood it is located in
- Adequate parking
- Affordable construction and operation

It was understood from the beginning that specific detail for each option are limited. It is this precise reason why this effort was undertaken. It is not feasible to pursue a detailed plan, cost analysis, and design on multiple options. Ultimately the town needs to make a decision about where it believes a library is best located. Once that is determined, the effort of developing a detailed plan can be undertaken.

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

Workshops were conducted on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, and May 13<sup>th</sup>. At each workshop, members of the RLWG manned stations with information about each option being considered, and the identified pros and cons. They recorded the questions and feedback they received at their station. Participants at each workshop were asked to vote for the option they preferred as they left the workshop. The workshops drew 79 participants in April and 39 in May. Seven participants identified themselves as attending both workshops.

A survey presenting similar information was launched in June. The survey was available online, and on paper at the Rice Public Library, Kittery Community Center, and Town Hall. The survey was advertised through multiple press releases, posting on the Town's website, notices to School, Library and KCC listserv email groups, bulletins on Channel 22, posts on Facebook and Twitter and announcements at Town Council meetings. Close to six hundred surveys were collected. Attached are the full survey results.

## **RESULTS OF INPUT**

In general, the respondents were supportive of developing a plan for the future of the library. However, no option emerged as the clear preference. Please note, data presented does not include quantification of open-ended responses. A review of the open-ended responses finds they are consistent in count and comment with the quantified responses.

Option 1 (no change) did not have a significant response at either the workshops (two votes total) or on the survey. To note, a small number of respondents selected "Option 4: Other" and wrote comments that either mirrored Option 1 or proposed total elimination of town support for the library.

The preferences for Option 2 (rehab and expand at current site) and Option 3 (new construction at KCC) are very close. The RLWG agreed in review of the survey and workshop data, the outcome was too close to deem decisive.

Option 4 raised ideas including placing a new library behind the KCC, using the KCC Annex, using the old Community Center, or a new location, e.g. unoccupied Kittery Mall space, new building at the Water District, Traip Academy, Wentworth Dennett building. In review, it was found that though each idea had some merit, they did not represent solutions that were more advantageous, particularly those involving purchase of land, than the options being considered.

Consistent throughout the workshops and the survey comments was concern about the potential loss of the Rice Building as a public space in the Foreside. If Option 3 (new building at KCC) is deemed the preferred option, the future of the Rice Building will still need to be addressed, keeping in mind the costs to the community if Rice were retained as a public asset.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The RLWG will be seeking Council approval to place a non-binding referendum question on the November 2017 ballot. The question will seek to identify which project should be advanced.

The RLWG has discussed at length its commitment to accept the results of the non-binding referendum question, regardless of how many votes an option prevails by. Once a preference is identified through the referendum process, the RLWG will develop a recommendation for next steps to advance the project. This may include the funding of a design, the establishment of a building committee, or articulation of goals and benchmarks to be met next.

### **NONBINDING REFERENDUM QUESTION**

The RLWG seeks Council approval for the following nonbinding referendum questions to be placed on the November ballot:

1. Which location should the town consider for the Rice Public Library facility needs?

- Rehabilitate and build an addition onto the current Rice Building
- Build a new library building adjacent to Rogers Road at the Kittery Community Center
- Neither of the above

### **Explanation**

The Rice Library Working Group is seeking to identify the public preference for the location of the library.

Currently, the Library operates out of two buildings, with cost inefficiencies associated with running two buildings. The current Library facilities have inadequate space for children's programming and other events. Neither building is handicapped-accessible, including the children's section of the Taylor building. Both will require substantial investments in the near future to maintain and upgrade technology.

Each of the proposed locations has advantages and disadvantages. Questions about funding sources, design, and the Library becoming a town department are not under consideration at this time.