

Massachusetts Libraries

BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS

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August 31, 2022

Ms. Sharon A. Sharry, Library Director
Jones Library, Inc.
43 Amity Street
Amherst, MA 01002

Dear Sharon:

This letter is in response to a request for documentation regarding the administration of grant funds, specifically the timing of milestone payments. The MBLC's fiduciary responsibility in regard to the disbursement of state taxpayer funds and the financial health of the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP) are paramount in decisions affected by extenuating circumstances.

As you know, the MBLC has accommodated the requests of the Jones Library, Inc. and the town of Amherst since prior to offering Amherst a provisional award, when your leadership asked to delay the grant award by a fiscal year due to the pandemic. We further accommodated the needs of the Library and Town when legal issues impacted the acceptance of the grant. The MBLC withheld the first disbursement after the execution of the grant contract with the Town until the referendum assured legal approval of the award by the Town Council and the community. Currently, it has come to our attention that Amherst's path forward with the Jones Library project may be blocked if the bidding process results in costs beyond the Town and Library's financial capacity. This prompted a question on your behalf about the return of grant funds with interest, which is clearly outlined in the assurances for the program.

Decisions regarding the delay of a milestone payment are not made lightly. Our building specialists, management team, and the Commissioners on our construction committee have discussed the situation presented by Amherst. The MPLCP will not be issuing a second payment to the Town of Amherst until the Town signs a contract with a general contractor and secures a building permit. We have been as flexible as possible with your project to assist the Town in its fiduciary responsibility to its taxpayers. The same flexibility is warranted for the fiduciary responsibility our agency has to the Commonwealth's taxpayers.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



James Lonergan
Director