



To: The Trustees of the Jones Library and the Jones Library Building Committee
Cc: Sharon Sharry, Director of the Jones Library
Paul Bockelman, Town Manager, Town of Amherst
Douglas Marshall, Chair, Planning Board

You must be very relieved to be so close to the bidding and construction states. The new spaces and facilities, inside and outside, will be transformative. In the long term, we anticipate that the renovated library and its grounds will have a beneficial impact on the Amherst History Museum.

In the short term, however, there are impacts which are of concern for the Trustees of the Historical Society. In March of 2022, Our Board President, Gigi Barnhill, met with Sharon Sharry and Ken Guyotte, the project engineer for Colliers Engineering regarding the construction phase of the project. Based on this conversation and the responses to direct questions regarding the construction engineering the Trustees understood that an easement would not be required and heavy equipment would be on the east side of the library. With this in mind, the Trustees went ahead with planning for 2024 programs and exhibits. We are now faced with a request for a 20- to 25-foot easement along our property line for heavy equipment to access the rear of the site. This is, as you can understand, very concerning, particularly as it impacts the structure of the building, the security of the collection and our ongoing audience development and programming.

I. Impact on the Structural of the Simeon Strong House (c.1750)

The trustees are extremely concerned about the impact on the most important object in the collection: The Simeon Strong House, the 270+ year old National Register of Historic Places listed building that is home to the Society and our collection of over 7000 objects related to the history of our community. In 2021, the Community Preservation Act Committee allocated to the AHS funds to conduct a visual engineering survey of the structure of the Museum and the conditions of the foundation and plaster walls and ceilings in the interior to help establish a baseline in assessing any damage from the adjacent construction. Kuhn Riddle Architects has also strongly recommended 3-dimension scans designed to give more precise measurements and assessment of existing conditions both before and after the construction is completed. The scans would be done by myBIMteam which was recommended by KRA at the cost of around \$12,000 (proposal attached). Troy Mifsad, CEO of myBIMteam, and Jacob Smith of Jacob Smith Engineering & Design concur that the before and after scans will provide documentation of any

shifts in height caused by damage to the foundation and assurance that the Strong House suffered no damage. The building already tilts; that issue is important to monitor. Documenting this structure is important. However, the Historical Society is not in the financial position to take on this expense and the Trustees feel that these scans are the responsibility of the Jones Library Building Project as it is a direct result of the construction. Indeed, during the conversation with Ken Guyotte in March 2022, the library offered to take on that expense.

II. Impact on the Collection of Objects

Additionally, the trustees of AHS worry about the impact of vibrations upon the collections housed within the Strong House. Currently many fragile items are on shelving units. Each item will need to be wrapped and placed into sturdy plastic tubs before construction begins. Two of the AHS trustees are putting together a budget for the materials; we believe we can depend on volunteers to do the packing. Again, this is an expense that we feel the Library project should absorb and we will present that budgeted cost shortly.

III. Impact on Programming and Audience Development

Finally, the AHS has been very successful in the past few years in activating the front lawn and the garden area for events such as the Winter Gear Sale, the Juneteenth Walk and Picnic in 2022, Artists on the Lawn, and concerts in the Garden. The AHS is now faced with curtailing these events or moving them elsewhere. These events have been instrumental in bringing more visitors to the Museum, a critical metric when applying to the Massachusetts Cultural Council and other funders as well as helping us to grow and develop our membership and donor base. Additionally, the closure of a good portion of the sidewalk on Amity Street means that there will be no people passing by the Historical Society. Foot traffic is an important source of new visitors. Thus, there is not only the inconvenience of moving events to other venues, there is potential for future issues with funding from MCC, which is dependent in part on visitation numbers. Now that we have been made aware of the change in the construction easement needs, we can plan more accordingly for 2025 and 2026 events.

In exchange for the above proposed expenses to be covered by the Jones Library Building Project, the trustees are willing to consider a fifteen-foot easement; twenty-five feet extends to the trunk of the Norway Spruce in the front yard and practically to the corner of the Simeon Strong House. Please note that the easement in 1990 was only ten feet. We will also require that our lawn be returned to the original state once construction is done with the seeding or sodding maintained for 6 months from the time it is laid and approval of the language in the final contract with the selected contractor regarding the determination and remediation of any damage that occurs to the building, grounds or collection of the Amherst Historical Society.

As for the permanent easement to accommodate the footings for the wall and fencing, we are willing to grant this permanent easement for \$1.00 and an agreement to have the DPW/town staff who is mowing the library lawn or clearing the Amity Street sidewalk also mow the AHS lawn and clear the Amity Street sidewalk at the same time in perpetuity.

In summary, the Amherst Historical Society requests the following:

- The Jones Library cover the cost of before and after 3-D scans conducted by myBIMteam;
- The Jones Library cover the cost of materials needed to pack fragile items in the AHS collections;
- The temporary easement is limited to fifteen feet and the lawn restored and maintained for 6 months following completion of the project;
- Approval of sections of the final construction contract pertaining to damage and remediation of AHS property and collections, including the Strong House;
- The mowing of the AHS lawn and clearing of the Amity Street sidewalk along the AHS property in perpetuity.

On Behalf of the Trustees of the Amherst Historical Society,



Georgia Barnhill
President



Elizabeth Larson
Treasurer