



ESSEX LIBRARY

ASSOCIATION

*Your Community Center for Lifelong
Learning and Cultural Enrichment*

Executive Director's Remarks Annual Meeting: October 28, 2020

Good evening. Thank you for joining this Annual Meeting of the Essex Library Association. I'm Deb Smith and it is my privilege to serve as the library's Executive Director. Our annual report for the fiscal year which ended June 30th is now available in print at the library and also on our website at www.youressexlibrary.org

What a difference a year makes! Last year at this time we were meeting in person in the library's Program Room; today we must meet via Zoom due to a pandemic that requires us to be nimble and adaptive in how we serve the community.

The past year has been truly remarkable. A year ago we launched a "Book Nook" at Valley Shore YMCA. The Friends of the Library held successful fundraisers, including a book sale, Swallows Cruise, and Festival of Dinners. By February, we had spruced up the building inside and out, making needed repairs to the brick walkway; that month we also printed a new brochure. By March, we had hosted more than 35,000 visits to the library and loaned 47,000 items from our physical collections.

Then - everything changed.

From mid-March to late May, the major challenge was keeping library services going even when the building had to close. Our staff quickly transitioned to remote work to keep services going. I want to give a special thank you to the Board and staff for their intense commitment and work during this time. Due to their engagement, we rapidly adapted to an online format, continuing book discussions, story times, lectures and programs. We issued library cards online and provided e-notary services. We also raided our supply closet to step up and donate much needed PPE to the Essex Ambulance Association. All the while, we continued to hope that the pandemic would be of short duration.

By April we had added 15,000 e-books and 90 e-magazines to our collection. In late May we became one of the first libraries statewide to start curbside pickup. In August we started appointments in the building. And just this month, October, the library has opened for short visits to browse the stacks or use computers, without the need for an appointment. I hope you will stop by to visit, or continue to use our curbside pickup service if that service best fits your needs. As we head into the winter months, we are continuing to monitor the pandemic to stay aligned with public health needs.

I won't lie. It has not been easy. We have had to cope with constant change and think in innovative ways that prioritize staff and community safety. We continue to adapt in ways big and small. One example of this is our socially distanced family event this coming Saturday at 9AM– Drive In Trick or Treating! If you have youngsters of a certain age in your household, I hope you'll join us to pick up some special treats and take a family photo in your costumes. I even have a special mask for the day!

I want to give a special thank you to the Town and to our supporters who made gifts this year. You enabled us to reach critical funding targets so that we could continue to offer high quality services and programs during an unprecedented global health and economic crisis. While we are not out of the woods yet with Covid-19, I am immensely grateful for your continued support and look forward to what can only be a better year

Finally, I would like to give special mention to Rita Christopher for her service as President of the Board the past two years and welcome Kathy Bonomi as our incoming President. I am so very grateful for your service.

I would also like to recognize three staff members who are celebrating employment anniversaries with the library this year: Ann Thompson, Head of Adult Services; Diane Simoneau in Catalog Services, and Anna Cierocki, our Reference and Technology Services Librarian. Between them, they have a combined 45 years of service to the community. I couldn't be prouder of their dedication and the gift of their talent. Thank you for all you have done to make the library the gem that it is today.

With that, I'll turn the floor over to Mike Hammond, Chair of the Nominating Committee.