

October 12, 2019

Pawlet Public Library Board

To: Janno Gay, Chair

In regard to the proposed lift expansion plan for the library, there are a number of reasons why it would be a real benefit to our patrons

As you know, I've worked as a Vermont Associates trainee at the library for almost four years.

A couple of years ago, one of our patrons, confined to a wheelchair, needed assistance. He had good upper body strength and was able to haul himself up the existing ramp using the handrail with his left hand. However, he could not exit down the ramp. The wheelchair was rolling forward and he could not both control the chair and hold the rail to slow the chair. I had to walk backward ahead of the chair, attempting to hold it from speeding down while also grasping the rail so that it wouldn't knock me down and, gaining speed, crash at the bottom.

Additionally, with any adverse weather conditions, the ramp can become even more difficult, becoming slippery or icy.

Recently, I have developed severe leg and knee problems resulting from an injury. Walking up and down the front entry steps is difficult but manageable very slowly. However, I would not be unable to use the ramp, either up or down. I cannot use the stairway from the main floor down to the lower level.

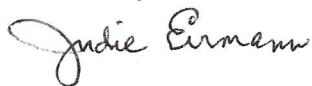
The new proposed entry, with a lift to the main level and to the lower level would be a great improvement, and would enable disabled or elderly patrons to access our facilities; at least two that I know of do not come in at all, but have a friend or family member pick out books for them. It would be great for them and others to have convenient access to meetings and group activities on the lower level.

We have had some lower level groups and meetings, both for library programs and through rentals by outside groups, and with better access the library could make better and more frequent use of our lower level, which is currently under-utilized. It could also be used for community programs outside of regular library hours, without access to the library itself and the chance of doors being left open or materials being removed.

Good access would both benefit the community and accommodate patrons with physical disabilities, who could use our very nice collection of books and audio-visuals.

Please consider this when you plan for expanded use of our beautiful facility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith Eirmann".

Judith Eirmann