

## Status of the East Branch Library January 2008



The East Branch Library, located in the Stone Building at 735 Massachusetts Avenue, has been closed to the public since August 21, 2007 due to a serious flood problem. A decision was made by the Trustees on Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007 to keep the Branch closed until all information related to its repair has been evaluated.

The Trustees have struggled, at least back to 1991, with the funding issues related to providing library services at this location. The struggle to maintain collections, provide staff, and deliver suitable hours of operation combined with a deteriorating building has created a real dilemma for service delivery. The Trustees know that they must now make a decision about the future of the Branch.

At the same time, the Town Capital Expenditures Committee has discussed the need for serious repairs and upgrades that would ensure the building's continued use as a public facility.

Care for the historic structure is the responsibility of the Town. That is why a request was made to the Community Preservation Committee last year for funds to conduct a comprehensive report on building conditions.

The Community Preservation Committee made a recommendation to Town Meeting that \$43,000 be appropriated to conduct a study of the building that would include a structural, preservation, mechanical and building code analysis.

The funding was approved and the project was in process when the building flooded. The Trustees expect to use the results of the study to assemble data needed to make their decision on future use rather than immediately repair damage caused by the flood. This is why the building continues to be closed.

While the Town has control over the physical building, the Trustees have authority over the use of the building. This is mandated in the deed that Ellen Stone delivered to the town upon the sale of the building.

The Trustees are interested in identifying alternative uses of the building that would follow the guidelines established by Ellen Stone. An invitation for proposals will be offered to the community and these proposals will be evaluated at a public hearing. There is no specific timeline for the ultimate decision since there is no information available yet on the study delivery.

The Trustees will make their decision, in collaboration with the Selectmen and Town Manager, once community proposals have been evaluated and the results of the study have been delivered.

Please contact the Library Director, Connie Rawson, with any questions at 781-862-6288 x316