



Betsy C. Maas
Town Supervisor

Town of Union Vale
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October 28, 2019

Elizabeth Scigliano, Board President,
Beekman Library
bscigliano@beekmanlibrary.org

Philip D. D'Angelo, Jr, Board President,
Millbrook Library
boardpresident@millbrooklibrary.org

Dear Ms. Scigliano and Mr. D'Angelo:

I write you today on behalf of the Town Board of the Town of Union Vale. Since we all may still be at different levels of awareness, I will try again to articulate our position and share some thoughts as we respond to your first communication dated October 3, 2019.

The suggestion from the recent letter that you "...find no purpose in meeting..." is counter to good communication and what libraries should stand for. Rebekkah Smith Aldrich's insistence that all four libraries circle the wagons and shut us out tells us that our concerns are meaningless to both MHLS and local library management. That is disappointing. Some conversation is always better than none so we are writing to you now to share important financial points, albeit without providing the context a conversation could have provided. Nonetheless, we hope you will consider our thoughts.

1. There are no other competitive cost models around the State of New York that justify the amount MHLS wants to charge us for library services. As an "unserved" town whose residents have never voted for a library or a library budget, we are outspending all other "unserved towns" in the State. MHLS cannot justify the dollar amount it is requesting.
2. Attached, you will find an analysis showing the per capita spending amount and the library expenditures as a % of total expenditures spent by "unserved" towns for library services. MHLS continues to throw us into a

category to which we do not belong but in our respective category, we pay a great deal.

3. We will not appropriate payments calculated on behalf of every town resident (“like public education”) without a vote. We can only appropriate what the town can afford. Given we prefer to be below the tax cap, no payment increase based on the 2% tax cap can be contemplated. Also, in 2020 the amount being requested is \$77,935. **Of the funds available for items such as libraries, the Mid-Hudson request constitutes 4.3% of such budget.** Library Services are the largest contractual appropriation we have. You are asking too much and the trajectory is unsustainable.
4. Very few, if any, other Systems contract with towns for library services. Almost all of the contracts around NY State for towns without a library are between the town and a library or more infrequently, between a town and two libraries. Library Systems are not typically in the middle of local relationships.
5. We still have no idea why Rebekkah is insisting the Town of Union Vale contract with MHLS since it is so unusual within the State. We can only assume she is overcharging us and keeping money or forcing us to pay four libraries against our stated wishes, (we are not a “hardship” for four libraries).
6. There is no other town in the State of New York that pays four libraries from the operating budget of the town.
7. We believe we should contract with our two closest neighbors, the two libraries for which we are a “hardship” – Beekman & Millbrook. We use your libraries the most and we want to pay you for that usage.
8. If you insist we contract with MHLS we could do that, but on terms similar to those we would embrace with both your libraries. The terms we would agree to are:
 - a. Consistent with the recommendations of the Union Vale Library Steering Committee, which concluded its work in 2017 (after the MHLS contract had already been signed), we will pay for services provided and we will use a common metric which is easy to track: library cards.
 - i. It should be noted that library cards are the most common metric used around the State of NY for payments of library services. Some towns/libraries even call them “memberships”.

- b. The contract will provide unrestricted library services to Union Vale residents as permitted to all residents of the chartered service area of the library.
 - c. We will have our residents get an address certification form from Town Hall to make sure both libraries assign them to "Union Vale" (we have been told that some addresses/zip codes are confusing). All library cardholders will start anew in 2020.
9. The contract we created for use with both your libraries, is attached for your review. If MHLS insists on being in the middle and contracting with Union Vale, it should be of similar length and content with payments going only to your two libraries: Beekman and Millbrook.
10. **We want the same deal structure (type of contract) that is typical between towns and libraries found all across New York State.**

As your customer, a town that is willing to pay a reasonable amount for library services, it seems we should be able to come to terms. Truly, we want to be good neighbors and patrons but want the four local libraries to stop ganging up on us at the insistence of MHLS. Given that we are paying more than any other "unserved" town in NY State at \$16.29 per capita (in 2017) somehow it must be realized that what MHLS is demanding is unfair. We simply cannot afford the price and annual increases MHLS is demanding.

We hope, as Presidents of the Boards of both Beekman and Millbrook libraries, you will be able to work with us to find a permanent solution to this dilemma. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Betsy Maas

cc: Barry Schibanoff, Board President, Dover Plains Library
bschiban@gmail.com
Erin Hawke, Board President, LaGrange Library
boardchair@laglib.org
Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Executive Director, Mid-Hudson Library System
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