

JONES LIBRARY

NORTH AMHERST LIBRARY • MUNSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

February 13, 2025

Vicky Bianco
MBLC Chair
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
90 Canal Street, Suite 500
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Vicky,

With this letter, we are respectfully requesting a one month extension for the Jones Library Project deadline with a revised date of April 30, 2025.

This project is relying heavily on State and Federal funding. The Town of Amherst must complete its Section 106 Historic Preservation Review before it can move forward. To this end, the Town continues working directly with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) to resolve the Project's adverse effects.

As the attached timeline summary shows, the Section 106 process was begun in October 2023, following the commitments of federal funding received earlier that year. The Town assumed authority for the Section 106 process in August 2024, recognizing that neither federal agency nor the MHC would make a determination and with intent to re-bid the project.

Since the MBLC generously granted a project extension in December, the following steps have been taken toward completing the Section 106 process:

- On December 26, 2024, the Town/Library received written feedback from MHC dated December 19, responding to the Town's Alternatives Analysis. (The Town had submitted this analysis to MHC in November and was awaiting MHC's response when we last met with the MBLC.) MHC's response asked the Town/Library to reconsider natural slate roofing, and to forego a book drop by the main entrance.
- Town/Library officials agreed to these considerations, informing MHC, other consulting parties, and federal agencies on January 10. At that time, the Town/Library announced plans for a second Consulting Parties meeting.
- On January 27, 2025, the Town held a second Consulting Parties meeting to discuss measures to resolve the adverse effects of the Project and develop potential mitigation measures to be included in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).
- On January 30 2025, the Town/Library filed the e106 documentation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), including a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). By regulation, ACHP has 15 days to respond and indicate whether they will or will not participate formally in the consultation. This documentation was also sent to the MHC and all consulting parties and posted publicly, requesting feedback on the MOA by COB on February 12, 2025.
- On February 10, 2025, the Town received an automated email message from Elizabeth Sherva at the MHC, notifying us that she no longer works at the MHC.
- On February 12, 2025, the Town received written comments from the MHC regarding the draft MOA.
- On February 13, 2025, the Town received a letter from the ACHP stating "we do not believe our participation in the consultation to resolve adverse effects is needed."

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Next steps are:

- The Town will respond to the MHC regarding the draft MOA during the week of February 17, 2025.
- Negotiations will continue until the final MOA is signed by the required signatories (i.e., Library, Town, MHC).
- The signed MOA must be included as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review required by HUD. The other elements of this documentation are underway. There is a regulatory 45-day review period before HUD can approve the project, which brings us to mid-April before we can sign with a General Contractor.

We look forward to meeting with you in March in order to discuss this request.

Sincerely,



Austin Sarat, President
Jones Library Board of Trustees



Paul Bockelman, Town Manager
Town of Amherst

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