

## THE MAYOR'S CORNER



**By Suzette DeBeatham-Brown**  
Bloomfield Mayor

Dear Bloomfield,

I have some good news to report: our Library Building Committee ("LBC") is hard at work. The LBC had its first official meeting in July and its second meeting earlier this week. The LBC is charged "with seeking a new facility for Prosser Public Library, either by renovating or expanding the current building or another alternative."

In late November, 2019, the Council received a communication from Joan Geetter, the then library board chair, recommending that the following individu-

als be named to the LBC: Mark Weisman; Greg Davis; Ann Leavitt (from the library board); Delores Howard; and Elizabeth Lane, library Director. Ann Leavitt was the only library board member suggested by chairperson Geetter.

On January 27, 2020, I appointed seven (7) members and a handful of liaisons to serve as ex-officio members. Within that appointment, I named Greg Davis, Esq. as Chair and Mark Weisman as Vice-Chair. Both of these individuals are experienced and highly respected for their work with libraries and building projects.

In fact, Attorney Davis has been a member of the Hartford Public Library board of directors since 2006; board chair from 2009-2011 and 2015 to present; and he has served on three (3) library building committees.

Similarly, Mr. Weisman, a senior architect, was chair of the previous LBC that made its recommendation to the Council in 2016, and he serves on the Human Services Facility Building Committee.

The LBC is lucky to have Michele Bononi (Secretary of LBC and Vice-Chair of Economic Development Commission); Vudonzi Graham-Days and Phoenix (parent and child); Lois Hagar (former LBC member); Sarai Peart (teacher and young adult library user); and Jesse White (BHS Administrator).

The appointed liaisons include Elizabeth Lane, Library Director; three (3) library trustees: Ava Biffer (retired librarian); Leah Farrell (librarian); and Dr. Maxine Ursery (CREC Administrator); Nancy Haynes (Town Purchasing and Risk Manager); Dave Melesko (Leisure Services Director); and myself (Mayor).

I am extremely grateful for

our member volunteers and our liaisons. They bring a wealth of knowledge to the project and I have the upmost confidence in the Committee delivering a state of the art library plan for our town.

With respect to the timing of the LBC commencing its work, please note that I appointed members to the Library Building Committee on January 27, 2020. The Committee was scheduled to begin its work in March, but with the COVID crisis, my focus and that of the Council has been on making sure our residents are safe and that our businesses are supported. A thoughtful and intentional decision was made to commence the Committee's work in July. The decision to postpone the start of the LBC until July had nothing to do with the project not being a priority - it had everything to do with making the safety and welfare of our residents first and foremost.

This Library project is very important to our town and I promise you that the finished project will be something that we are all proud of. I am confident that the LBC will work with library board and the Council to deliver on its charge.

In addition, I have made it known to the LBC that it is imperative to have the community's involvement in the discussions about what our new library should look like. To that end, you can expect to hear about forums and other opportunities for your participation from the Committee.

You may remember that in 2016 the previous Council made the difficult decision to move forward with the human services building project (\$30M) instead of the library building project (\$20M). From a fiscal viability standpoint, the target date will likely be 2021 for a library building referendum, with a projected need for financing in 2023 when our debt levels start to decline from the current building projects.

Again, I thank the Library Building Committee; the library staff and board; and everyone involved in making sure that Bloomfield has a first class, state of the art, 21st century library.

In closing, I would like to thank Joan Geetter for her long-standing service to the library, the library board of directors, and the town.