

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Why does the new library building cost so much?**

The new library building's projected cost (\$538,000 for 2500 square feet--about \$215/square foot) is, according to local contractors, in the ballpark for new construction of high quality. The Whatcom County Executive Officer told me in a recent meeting that his office was seeing around \$250/square foot as a typical price for new construction. So, first, its cost is not particularly high. It may be higher than some housing, but it is not a house; it is a public building, owned by a government entity (Point Roberts Park and Recreation District) and must meet standards that private building are not required to meet (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, open bidding for contracts, etc.)

2. **Why doesn't the County pay for it? What do we get for the property taxes we pay for the library?**

The County doesn't pay for it because, in Whatcom County, the County doesn't pay for library building for anyone. If a community wants more library services than a bookmobile, then it must provide an adequate building. Point Roberts has been providing that building (or a part of a building) for about 65 years. If we want a larger library, then the residents of Point Roberts must provide that building either through fundraising or through the raising of a levy by the Park and Recreation District. It cannot be said enough times: the County does not lease, rent, buy, renovate, or build library buildings for anyone. What we get for the part of the property taxes that go to the Whatcom County Library System are (1) the services, (2) the materials and equipment, and (3) the personnel/staff that turns an empty building into a library. In addition, the WCLS pays the utilities for a library building.

3. **Why do we need a new library? The old one works fine for me.**

If you are an older person, then your expectations of a library may be like mine. You go there and check out a book and then you go home. Or you go there and return a book and then you go home. But just as technology has changed the rest of the developed world, so has it changed how people can and do use libraries. If you have not visited a new library in some other town or city, you should do so. It is a different world than it used to be. I, personally, mostly just use the library to check books in and out, but that is largely because I live nearby and have lots of technology in my house and know how to use it. But everybody doesn't have that access and everybody doesn't know how to use it even if he or she has it. You can download an e-book from the library at home if you have the equipment and know how to use it. But if you need some help, you need to get to the library where a trained librarian will help you. And the librarian needs the space to work with you.

A 21st Century library has space for tables and chairs where people can work with their own laptop or tablet computers or can use library computers to access the internet to do all the things that they need. It has room for many children to work together on a learning project that will not interfere with other users. There are places for parents to read aloud to their kids. It is first of all about adequate space. The current 'Children's Library' in P.R. is about 130 square feet That's not good enough for 15 kids. That's not good enough for our own children. Libraries are increasingly being expected to work with public schools to

provide educational programs. You can't do it in 130 square feet.

Over the past year, I have spent several hours each week looking for grant possibilities. As it happens, there are numerous grant possibilities for libraries right now. Unfortunately, they are all to increase the number of programs that the library can offer to the community. If we had a bigger library, I'd be working to write applications for those grants. But there is no point if you don't have the space to carry out the program.

Finally, our library space is inadequate now and will only become more so. Sixty-five years ago, the residents of Point Roberts decided that this community needed a library and they worked to provide one adequate for its day. It is time again for the residents of this community to arrange for a library appropriate to these times and available for the next 50 years, to the residents who will follow us here.