

ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

FREDERICK J. MARSHALL
LEGISLATOR - 13th DISTRICT
MINORITY LEADER



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December 11, 1998

Chairman Rebecca Mahoney
Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Board of Trustees
Buffalo & Erie County Public Library
C/O Director's Office
Lafayette Square
Buffalo, NY 14203

Dear Ms. Mahoney:

Recent events make it necessary for me to take a strong stand concerning the status of library service in the Town of Collins. In my view, it is absolutely essential that the residents of Collins, all of whom are Erie County taxpayers, have available to them, a quality state of the art, library that is located in the Town of Collins.

The Town of Collins library board of trustees has taken steps to ensure that Collins residents will enjoy good library service well into the future. It is their plan to replace the current library, (which is located in the basement of the town hall and is completely inadequate) with a new, state of the art facility. A site has been identified and an option to purchase secured from the owner. The Town is ready to proceed, but there are two major obstacles standing in its way.

First, the Collins Library Board has repeatedly attempted to convince the Gowanda Library Board to merge the two libraries, join forces, consolidate funding and build a new library to serve all residents of the Town of Collins and Village of Gowanda. However, the Gowanda Library Board has consistently refused to join in this endeavor and continue to do so even now. While the efforts of the Gowanda Board to preserve its small but inadequate facility are admirable, the greater good of the entire community, must be given due consideration.

As long as anyone can remember, the Gowanda Library, which is located in Cattaraugus County, has received funding from Erie County. I must now recommend that all funding from Erie County to the Gowanda Library end as of December 31, 1999. I further ask that your board consider this request and make a recommendation as quickly as possible in order that the Gowanda Library have as much time as possible to secure replacement funding. I would also request that the funds now given to the Gowanda Library be diverted directly to the Collins Library beginning January 1, 2000. These extra funds would be used to assist the Collins

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Library in its transition to a new facility.

Secondly, the report recently issued by Aaron Cohen Associates of Croton-on-Hudson recommends the closing of both the Collins Library and the Gowanda Library as part of a consolidation plan. I must go on record as being adamantly opposed to this suggestion. The people in the Town of Collins deserve good library service in their town. The Collins Library Board has been working diligently toward the goal of building a new library to replace the old one. We should be working just as diligently to assist them in that endeavor. Without a library in their town, Collins residents would have to drive many miles, sometimes in bad winter conditions, to receive library service. As gentle as this past winter was, next year's winter may be equally harsh and hazardous.

I sincerely hope that we can all work together to insure that Collins continues its tradition of providing fine library services to its residents. People who live in the rural town of southern Erie County often comment that most government officials believe that Erie County "ends" at Hamburg. By closing both of these libraries, wouldn't we be reinforcing that message? We simply cannot afford to isolate and alienate the people of rural southern Erie County. They are taxpayers too and they don't deserve to lose their library service.

I look forward to working with the Central Library Board on this issue. I encourage your board to schedule public hearings, not just in the more populated areas as planned, but also in those rural areas that would be so drastically affected. I know that with a cooperative effort we can resolve this problem and allow the Town of Collins to proceed with its plan of building a new library - a library that all its people need and deserve.

Sincerely,



Frederick J. Marshall
Minority Leader
Legislator - 13th District

cc: Erie County Executive Dennis Gorski
Diane J. Chrisman, Acting Director Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Board
Charles Swanick, Erie County Legislature Chairman
Kenneth Kruly, Erie County Budget Director
Salvatore Dicembre, President Collins Library Board of Trustees
Donald Tew, Supervisor Town of Collins
Fred Weyand, President Gowanda Library Board of Trustees