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# Press Release

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## **Pratt and North Weymouth Library Branches to Remain Closed Following Opening of the New Tufts Library**

**Fogg Library to Re-Open in November**

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Weymouth, MA – For several years now Weymouth officials have struggled with the challenge of spreading out library resources and staff among its four branch libraries: Tufts, Fogg, Pratt, and North. At times it prevented the Town from providing the kind of wide-ranging library services that Weymouth residents deserve. This past spring, the challenge became even greater when, along with other Town departments, the library budget was restricted due to the economic recession brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), Weymouth has more libraries per capita than all but two communities in Massachusetts – Springfield and Barnstable.

“Even before a New Tufts Library, our limited resources made it difficult to adequately staff and operate four libraries,” said **Rob MacLean, Weymouth Library Director**. “Now, with a brand new, significantly larger Tufts Library, it unfortunately does not make fiscal or management sense to keep all four branches open.”

In addition to the economic realities that went into this decision, the timing of it was largely based two retirements of staff members who had worked at North Library. Rather than filling those full-time positions, the Town will replace them with five part-

time positions that will help library management cover immediate staffing issues at Tufts Library, particularly on evenings and weekends. The Fogg Library will not be impacted by these changes and the plan is to reopen Fogg Library in November at a slightly reduced schedule due to COVID-19 safety measures.

The decision to reopen the Fogg Library was done for a number of reasons: it is the busiest branch library; it has two community meeting rooms; the Town invested more than \$3.5 million in its renovation in 2014; and it is on the National Register of Historic Places.

"We realize that even though Pratt Library and North Library were only open 16 hours a week each, they were treasured by many who lived in their immediate neighborhoods and used them regularly," **said Mayor Hedlund**. "In the end, this necessary consolidation will help strengthen the Weymouth Public Libraries and allow us to focus on making Tufts Library a tremendous resource that will serve all of Weymouth, now and in the future."

After such a significant public investment in the new Tufts, which is one of the largest libraries in southeastern Massachusetts, Mayor Hedlund is prioritizing Tufts staffing in order to safely and most effectively serve the community. For example, there is currently only one staff member working on the second floor of Tufts in the evening and the Teen Room is locked when the teen librarian is not working. To expand the use of these offerings within the COVID-19 guidelines, additional staffing will be needed at Tufts. The closing of the branch libraries will allow for that to be achieved without necessitating many new hires during this time of economic uncertainty.

As for the future use of Pratt and North Libraries, Mayor Hedlund will work with Town Councilors, neighbors, and other residents and stakeholders to help develop an appropriate reuse plan for both branches.

"Over the next six months, we will be evaluating the buildings, seeing what their maintenance needs are, and coming up with a plan for re-use. We will be sure to develop a re-use plan that fits within the existing neighborhoods," **said Mayor Hedlund**.

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