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Press Release

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Weymouth awarded \$12 million Public Library Construction Grant

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Weymouth, MA – Mayor Robert Hedlund announced today that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) has awarded a \$12,085,184 Provisional Construction Grant to the Town of Weymouth for construction of a new public library. The project will demolish and rebuild the existing Tufts Library located in Weymouth Landing. Weymouth was one of nine communities to receive a grant through the state-funded Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP). The grant will assist the Town in financing more than 40 percent of the library's construction cost.

"We are very thankful to the MBLC and the Baker-Polito Administration for recognizing the importance of the Tufts Library to our community," **said Mayor Robert Hedlund.** "Every day more and more residents use the library for access to technology and as a community space where programs and other activities help them learn new skills and connect with neighbors. For too long, the existing building has held us back. Now we have the opportunity to provide Weymouth with a true 21st-century library."

"This is a banner day for Weymouth and Tufts Library," **said Library Services Director Robert Maclean.** "After 52 years, today marks a new chapter for building a new library that can provide Weymouth residents with the kind of 21st-century library services that they need and deserve."

"The Commonwealth's local public libraries provide individuals of all ages with invaluable resources that they otherwise might not be able to access," **said Governor Charlie**

Baker in a statement. "Our administration is pleased to once again support this important grant program that invests in cities and towns across the Commonwealth."

MPLCP grants assist local libraries with financing major capital improvement projects, including constructing a new public library, expanding and renovating an existing library, or adapting and reusing another building for use as a library. The average grant award is 45 to 50 percent of a project's eligible construction cost, with the remaining balance paid by the municipality.

Weymouth's Tufts Library was constructed in 1965 and was considered a modern library for its time. More than 50 years later, the building is a dinosaur in a world where libraries have evolved from hushed reading rooms to responsive community centers. According to the MBLC, attendance at public library programs has increased 49 percent since 2006 and every 5.5 seconds a Massachusetts resident accesses the internet through a public library. The existing Tufts Library has neither the space nor technology to keep pace with existing trends.

"We're sometimes asked whether libraries are still necessary in this digital age," **said MBLC Chair Mary Ann Cluggish in a statement.** "The answer is an overwhelming yes. Libraries are busier than ever assisting residents with job searches or business start-ups, teaching residents to use new technology, or simply providing the only free space where everyone in the community can continue their education. This important work would not be possible without the support of Governor Baker and the Legislature."

MPLCP grant rounds are offered on an irregular basis, based on a number of factors, including state bond authorizations and the availability of funds through the MBLC's annual capital budget. The most recent MPLCP grant round opened in May of 2016, with applications due January 26, 2017.

Mayor Hedlund and his staff recognized the need for investment in a new Tufts Library shortly after taking office. Apart from basic accessibility concerns, the building has substantial repair and renovation needs, including its roof, elevator, and technology infrastructure. Replacement of the HVAC system alone would cost upwards of one million dollars, while fixing the building's other deficiencies would cost millions more. In the end, the Town would be left with a library no better equipped to provide for the needs of the community.

While most cities and towns plan for at least two years before submitting a MPLCP grant application, Weymouth had less than a year to complete its work. Mayor Hedlund quickly assembled a Library Construction Committee, initiated development of a Library Building Program, and committed \$100,000 to hiring an architectural firm for schematic design. The firm Johnson Roberts Associates of Somerville was hired to complete this work.

Current plans for the Tufts Library provide for a new building totaling 50,296 square feet. Major features of the project will include an expanded children's department to match new and growing services; a variety of programming areas to accommodate different age groups; a comprehensive technology infrastructure designed for flexibility and expansion;

a suite of community meeting rooms available for after-hours use; and a local history center that allows for preservation and secure use of the Town's nationally significant collection.

Additional plans for the new library include obtaining the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. Projects that achieve LEED certification are eligible to receive additional state funds through the MBLC's Green Library Incentive Program totaling 2 to 3.5 percent of the community's grant award.

"Rebuilding the Tufts Library has been long overdue. These funds will allow the Town to create a facility that better suits the needs of Weymouth's residents," **said Senator Patrick O'Connor**. "Our libraries provide valuable educational and communal resources that make our towns stronger. I thank the Baker-Polito Administration for awarding this generous grant, and I cannot wait to see the new Tufts Library."

"I am thrilled Weymouth is receiving this grant to rebuild the Tufts Library," **said Representative James Murphy**. "Tufts library has always been a centerpiece of our community, and this grant will ensure that it will remain so for generations to come."

Funding for the MPLCP is authorized by the Governor and the Legislature. Funding for this grant round is part of the general governmental needs bond filed in March of 2013, which included \$150 million for the MPLCP.

In the most recent MPLCP grant round, 33 libraries across the state applied for funding. Twenty-four libraries have been wait listed and will receive construction grants as funding becomes available either through the existing bond bill or a future bond authorization.

Weymouth will have six months to secure the local match necessary to accept its MPLCP grant.

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