

Mayor's Column
September 26, 2016

I haven't written about one of our most enduring and admired institutions in the Village in over five years. As is want to happen, I sometimes get mired in the weeds and neglect to focus on our most signature institutions, one of which is our library, a mainstay on the "Four Corners."

Our immensely attractive and expansive library, which many mistakenly believe was originally a Village home due to its majestic beauty, actually had a very modest beginning. It began as a book exchange/lending service operated out of the Bronxville School which was then located on Pondfield Road. Demand quickly outpaced supply and as a reaction to residents' requests, the Library soon relocated to a much bigger space in the original Bronxville Village Hall, under the beautiful colonnade, now the home of the Soccer Store late in 1906. This same cavernous building also housed our first police and fire departments as well as a bowling alley and indoor pool!

When the second grade class at the Bronxville School visits every spring, I lose a great deal of credibility when I tout all of the advances in the refurbished Village Hall and I somehow forgot to put in the pool!

Many an eight year old head shakes in utter disbelief!

As Village services in general improved and expanded, Village elders conceived of the "Four Corners" concept, incorporating a school, a church, a government building and a library to anchor a "new" center of the Village and add some gravitas to the intersection of Pondfield Road and Midland Avenue, then largely undeveloped.

As fruit of their vision, a library opened in 1942 as an adaptation of a residential Georgian style structure so designed by esteemed architecture Harry Leslie Walker.

Another half century passed and the functions and facilities of a 1942 library were soon in need of a modernization. In 2001, funded with the proceeds of the sale of the Childe Hassam painting, "Central Park", gifted to the library by longtime resident William Burt, the library was enlarged and upgraded. Chief among the

improvements was increased technology capability, electrical upgrading, open reading space and our first community room, the Yeager Room, funded by residents Barbara and George Yeager.

The library has sustained its beauty and excellence thanks to generous bequests both in furnishing donations and monetary support over the years from caring residents. We are grateful to them all.

In an effort to shield libraries from the vagaries of politics and safeguard First Amendment principles, municipalities fund a library during the normal operating budget cycle, but have no control over any aspect of library operations or distribution of funds thereafter. It is in the sole legal discretion of the Library Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Library Director, to make decisions as to staffing, materials purchased and hours of operation.

Quite specific, New York State Library Law also requires that a community with 5,000-7,500 residents must have a paid Library Director with a Masters in Library Science and be open a minimum of 35 hours per week.

Critical to the Library's sustained success is the volunteer effort of our residents on the Library Board of Trustees and the Friends of the Bronxville Library Board.

By New York State Statute, our Library Board may have seven to nine members appointed by the Mayor with the approval of the Board of Trustees for a three year renewable term.

The Library Board of Trustees charts out the Library's future, approves capital plans and determines and codifies all policies and procedures.

Since by law in New York State, a Library Board may not function as a fund raising entity, we have a 501(c)(3) non-profit board so named The Friends of the Bronxville Library. The Friends work seamlessly with the Library Trustees and collect funds, sponsor special projects and events, and bring attention to Library programs and services.

As example, just this month the Friends purchased four Kindles for the Children's and Youth Adult Departments which are preloaded with books of substance including the Bronxville School's suggested summer reading list.

Our Library constantly offers new services and programs always keeping up with times.

Starting on October 6th, library staffers will give one on one help with e book downloading at 10:30am every Thursday. One needs just to call the day prior for an appointment.

The Library is always buzzing whether it be the community wide book club meeting in October on the 18th or the reprise of "Zombie Night" for our teens on Saturday October 1st.

All of the programs are open to the public and information is accessed easily by clicking on the website at BronxvilleLibrary.org or speaking to our incredibly professional and welcoming staff by calling 337-7680.

Take advantage of all our beautiful library has to offer.