



## **Berlin Public Library Long Range Planning Update May 2006**

**The Library Long Range Planning Committee** is developing a plan for making the library more useful to the townspeople of Berlin.

We all recognize that our library is small and therefore cannot provide all of the services that we would like. *Although a new or expanded library may be in our future, our immediate goal is to make the best use of the facilities we now have.*

The Department of Environmental Protection has evaluated our site and given us permission to continue using the library as is, but will not allow expansion, because we cannot meet the public water supply regulations. We are currently pursuing a waiver at the State House level.

In the meantime, as part of our planning how to improve our library services, we looked at what other small town libraries do, talked to library patrons, and recently held four focus groups for Berlin residents. The meetings were directed by a professional library consultant and were attended by 48 people.

### **Focus Groups Report**

It was generally agreed that the library serves the town well with the resources that it has available. However, several areas were noted that need attention. The *Consultant's Report* on the focus groups identified the following recurring themes:

- *Building issues*

Front entrance accessibility, steep stairs inside and out, lack of reading space, cramped bathroom facilities, poor air quality downstairs.

- *Computer services*

Lack of library website, on-line communication with patrons, and wireless access.

- *Hours*

Lack of hours for working people and inconsistency of hours.

### **Moving Forward**

The Long Range Plan will outline how we will address these and other issues gathered in our planning process, but there are several changes we have decided to put in place over the next several months.



### 1) Building issues

*The front stairs* of the library are difficult or impossible for some residents to use. We met with the town ADA (American Disabilities Act) committee and they concur that we should build a ramp to the front door. We will look at designs and costs for this work over the summer.

Steve Lundberg installed two new handrails on the *interior stairs* to the lower level. We also plan to install an overhang and buzzer at the side door to make the lower level more accessible to those who wish to avoid the long steep stairs.

We have *little space to sit down and read* a newspaper, review books, or do school research projects. Comfortable seating, tables with chairs, and a brighter, more spacious atmosphere would make the library more useful and appealing. We plan to remove outdated non-fiction materials to create some space for additional seating upstairs.

Much of the *poor air quality* downstairs has to do with the lack of a dehumidifier, damp carpeting and an accumulation of old materials in the storage room. Thanks to the efforts of the Friends of the Library, the storage room is now repainted, cleaned from top to bottom and will soon have a new dehumidifier.

### 2) Computer services

The Library *web site* is now in its final revision and will soon be available at [townofberlin.com/library](http://townofberlin.com/library). We also plan to expand our computer capabilities with updated computers and *wireless access*.

### 3) Hours

To address the needs of those who work during the weekdays we are considering extending the closing time to 6:30 pm and making the hours consistent on Monday – Thursday from 11:00 am – 6:30 pm. Saturday would stay the same (10:00 am – 1:00 pm). The change would not increase the overall hours per week the library is open (33 hours) as we would be reducing the time the library is open on Wednesdays.

### **Town Survey**

We are preparing a survey to get suggestions you may have on how we can make the library more useful to you. This survey will be sent to each household in Berlin in June and will be also available on-line.

### **Your comments are always welcome!**

Thank you for your support of the library as we move forward with making changes to make it more useful for everyone. Please fill out a survey and give us your thoughts at any time by speaking to our **Director Suzanne McGuire** (838-2812) or any member of the Long Range Planning Committee.

### **Long Range Planning Committee**

Evy Dueck, Trustee Chair  
Steve Huntley, Planning Coordinator  
Suzanne McGuire, Director  
Marsha Johnston, Trustee  
Beth Owen, Trustee  
Steve Russell, Trustee  
Heather Simpson, Trustee