

## **Library Programming**

Town Meeting, March 2018  
Rochester School Auditorium

The Rochester Public Library set up a display table in the lobby prior to town meeting with examples of our offerings, copies of our annotated budget, and the librarian passed out copies of the March calendar of events.

For the first time in 50 years, the budget appropriation for the Rochester Public Library, a municipal library, was removed from the town budget and stood alone as a separate article. No explanation was offered to either the trustees or the public by the select board for the unusual article.

When the article came up for a vote, none other than the town clerk stood and criticized the library budget, line by line. Everyone was stunned.

Then from behind my left shoulder, an elderly gentleman stood with a library March calendar in his hand. The neon green flyer was held aloft and shaken by a man, known by most as a curmudgeon. My heart sank. This was a man who had in my tenure never set foot in the library.

Then he spoke in a booming voice while shaking the flyer at the audience. "Did you see this?" I thought to myself here it comes, thinking about the next event, the kick off for our Feminist Literature Book Club. "Look at all these programs coming up at the library, looks like something for everybody," and he continued praising the programs we offered the town.

As he sat down, another elderly gentleman whose wife occasionally visited the library stood and echoed the sentiments of all the programs he had seen advertised on the bulletin board at the post office every week.

The husband of a former trustee stood and lambasted the select board for their smoke and mirrors of removing the \$46,600 library appropriation from the town budget and then claiming they level funded the town budget.

And one after another people stood and spoke about how much they loved the library. But interestingly no one mentioned books they checked out, our collection, or anything about reading. Each person, whether they had ever actually attended a program or not, spoke about all the interesting things happening at the library.

After several townspeople stood to urge support of the library appropriation the vote was almost unanimous.

Submitted by Jeannette Bair, Library Director, Rochester Public Library