

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

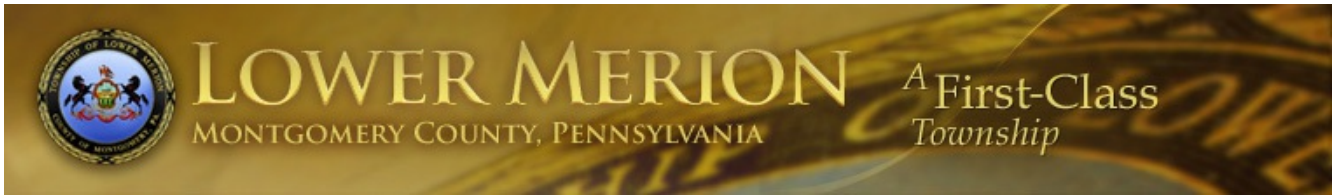
GRANTS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**Wednesday, May 1, 2024
6:45 PM (Approximately)**

Chairperson: Maggie Harper Epstein
Vice Chairperson: Ray Courtney, Andrew Gavrin

AGENDA

1. **AUTHORIZATION TO ISSUE A LETTER OF SUPPORT TO THE GLADWYNE
FREE LIBRARY**



AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

ITEM: AUTHORIZATION TO ISSUE A LETTER OF SUPPORT TO THE GLADWYNE FREE LIBRARY

Consider for recommendation to the Board of Commissioners authorizing the issuance of a letter of support to the Gladwyne Free Library for inclusion in a grant application to the COVID-19 ARPA Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	Type
<input type="checkbox"/> Issue Briefing - Gladwyne Library Grant	Issue Briefing
<input type="checkbox"/> Gladwyne Free Library Support Request Letter	Backup Material

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Grants and Community Development Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Issuance of a Letter of Support to the Gladwyne Free Library for a COVID-19 ARPA Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program Grant Application.

Prepared By: Brandon Ford, Assistant Township Manager

Date: April 26, 2024

I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

Authorize the issuance of a letter of support to the Gladwyne Free Library for inclusion in a grant application to the COVID-19 ARPA Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program.

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

A letter of support to state agencies should be authorized by the Board of Commissioners.

III. Current Policy or Practice (If Applicable):

In the past, the Township has issued letters of support for grant applications submitted by non-Township entities that act to further Township goals. Although the Gladwyne Free Library is part of the Lower Merion Township Library System, the Library's physical structure and property are not owned by the Township. Improvements are approved and financed by the Gladwyne Free Library Board of Trustees.

IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

In April 2024, a request was received from the Gladwyne Free Library for a Letter of Support from the Township to include in the Library's grant application to the COVID-19 ARPA Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program. This grant program is being offered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) with non-profit organizations, such as the Gladwyne Free Library, eligible to apply for funding.

The Gladwyne Free Library is requesting \$330,000 in grant funds from DCED to update their facility to meet the needs of the community. Currently, the Library's second-floor community room serves as a multi-purpose meeting space where the majority of their in-person programming is held, as well as an antiquated kitchen and an art gallery with monthly rotating exhibits. The Library seeks to create a Maker's Space focusing on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) programming and resources,

updating the existing kitchen space with modern, energy-efficient appliances, and renovating the 3rd floor attic space to accommodate additional meeting and working space. The Library also intends to improve the plumbing and windows in their historic building.

V. Impact On Township Finances: None.

VI. Staff Recommendation: Letters of Support of this nature are a policy decision and staff does not have a position on whether the Gladwyne Free Library's request should be granted.

April 17, 2024

To the Lower Merion Board of Commissioners:

I am writing to you today as a constituent (1340 Beaumont Drive, Gladwyne), and as the fundraising chair for the Gladwyne Free Library Board of Trustees. The Board is currently in the process of applying for the COVID-19 ARPA PA Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program. This grant would provide much-needed funding in order to maintain and revitalize our historic library. We are requesting \$330,000 in funding for capital improvements to the 2nd floor community meeting room, the existing attic space, plumbing, and windows of our historic building.

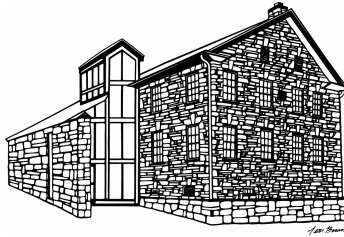
As part of the lengthy grant application process, we require letters of support from community stakeholders to strengthen our proposal. I have attached a draft of our project narrative for your review. If you feel compelled, we would ask that you complete a brief letter of support for the library. I understand that this may raise some questions, and I would be happy to discuss the project with you more in-depth if you are interested.

I hope we can count on your support for this project. As always, thank you for all you do to support the community of Gladwyne and our library!

Sincerely,

Mary Kate Bolinder

Attachment: Gladwyne Free Library Proposal for COVID-19 ARPA PA Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program



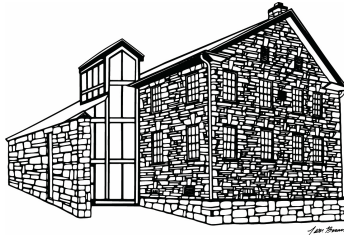
The Gladwyne Free Library
362 Righters Mill Road
Gladwyne, PA 19035
TEL: (610) 642-3957 · FAX: (610) 642-3985

Proposal for COVID-19 ARPA PA Multi-Purpose Community Facilities Program

The Gladwyne Free Library (GFL) was founded in 1931 by community activists Maud & Stuart Bell. Gladwyne Free Library serves the residents of Lower Merion and surrounding communities by providing access to and promoting a wide variety of books, audio-visual materials, and electronic resources reflecting the diverse needs and interests of the population. It supports the informational, educational, recreational, and cultural needs of groups and individuals of all ages. As part of the Lower Merion Library System, Gladwyne Free Library promotes the values of engagement, exploration, and excellence.

The purpose of this request is to update the Gladwyne Free Library community room to meet the needs of the growing population we serve. Currently, our second-floor community room serves as a multi-purpose meeting room where the majority of our in-person programming is held, as well as an art gallery with monthly rotating exhibits. The second floor of the library is also home to the Pennsylvania Room Collection, an archival collection of titles important to the study of local and state history, architecture, biography, travel, and industry. The present collection is over 1700 volumes. The last update of this second-floor space was in 1976. We aim to maintain the historic components of the space, while also updating it with the following improvements. With the execution of this project, we envision:

1. **Maker's Space:** focusing on our community's request for additional STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) resources and programming, we aim to provide a modern, accessible, multi-use Maker's Space. The Maker's Space will include a suite of STEM resources, including but not limited to digital resources (ipads, laptops), 3-D printer, Smart TV & Projector, Coding and Robotics kits, flexible and collaborative seating, and additional science kits for students in grades K-12. The space will be open and accessible to all individuals during regular library hours, with additional opportunities for community learning and STEM programming hosted by library science professionals and community partners.
2. **Community Kitchen:** updating our existing kitchen space to include modern, energy-efficient appliances. The community kitchen will be a



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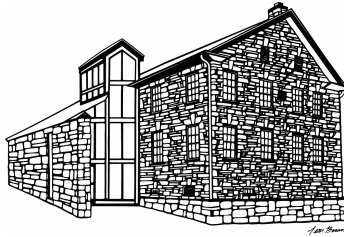
place to host cooking classes, cookbook clubs, and nutritional science education experiences for all ages.

3. Renovating 3rd-floor attic space: Our current attic space serves as storage, and is restricted from patron access. Within the completion of this project, we envision maximized usable space within our existing footprint by updating the 3rd story attic space into additional meeting and working space. Patrons often request a quiet area for tutoring, studying, or working out of office. Providing additional meeting space in this previously unused area of the library will increase our usable square footage and provide library patrons with multiple options to use and enjoy our facility.

The building that houses the Gladwyne Free Library was erected in 1921. In its 100+ year history, the building has seen many community uses. It has been a post office, a community health center, a polling place, a site for various club meetings, and a gymnasium. The library building has consistently been a convenient and accessible meeting place for members of the community. Our proposed project aims to meet our current community needs while also looking towards the needs of future library users, so our library remains a relevant, sustainable, and integral part of the community for generations to come. The care and maintenance of a historic building is not without its challenges. Our proposed plan includes crucial updates to the building to meet modern demands of efficient electrical, plumbing, and digital infrastructure.

The library has undergone expansions and many improvements including the 2016 addition of an ADA-compliant elevator serving all floors of the library, a new entryway to accommodate the elevator, and a designated Young Adult area. Funds for this effort were provided by the Township of Lower Merion, a Pennsylvania Keystone Grant, and the Lower Merion Library Foundation. Local fundraising continues to play a significant role in our collections and the maintenance of the building. The Board of Trustees must raise over \$50,000 annually to meet these needs.

Gladwyne Free Library, as a member of the Lower Merion Library System, has the capacity to reach beyond its immediate patron base to the larger community and beyond to encourage attendance and promotion of this project. The Lower Merion Library System provides services to the 61,000 residents of Lower Merion, as well as residents of surrounding communities. There are 34,654 registered library users in the system and a total circulation (electronic and



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physical) of 1,023,624. As of April 2024, Gladwyne Free Library has 2,173 directly registered users, and houses a physical collection of 46,699 items. Our circulation and attendance records continue to grow. Circulation volumes increased 13% from 2022 to 2023, from 55,531 items to 62,722 items. Total

unique visits increased by 17%, from 45,799 visits to 53,588 visits. Our growing number of visitors indicates the need for more usable space and programming for the community. All events and activities associated with this program will be offered at no charge and open to all.

The Lower Merion Library system, as a whole, is focused on the changing demographics of the community, and it seeks to be responsive to issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity. The racial and ethnic profile of Lower Merion Township has been gradually changing, with 10% increase in the last decade in Asian, Black, and Hispanic populations. Minority enrollment in Lower Merion School District is now 30% of the student body (majority Asian and Black). In 17% of Lower Merion households, a language other than English is spoken at home. Humanities programming, such as 2022's PHC grant-funded PA SHARP Program "At Home in the World" which ran at all six libraries in the Lower Merion Library System, allows us to serve diverse audiences, promote new perspectives, and engage new audiences.

The completion of this project will bring our meeting space into the 21st century, and allow the library to continue to adapt and change to meet the growing needs of our community.