

Cairo Public Library
Board of Trustees
512 Main Street
Cairo, NY 12413



NOVEMBER 14, 2021

Members of the Town of Cairo, Town Board

512 Main Street, Cairo, NY 12413

Dear Members of the Town of Cairo, Town Board,

The Cairo Public Library Trustees have decided unanimously to send a letter to the Town of Cairo, Town Board. The purpose of this letter is twofold. First, we wish to show our absolute support of Debra Kamecke, The Cairo Public Library Director. Her professionalism and commitment to the library is without reproach. The Town of Cairo residents are lucky to have such a devoted and faithful Director who gives selflessly of her time and energy to make the library cutting edge and the envy of the other libraries in Greene County and around the state. In addition to the many awards our library has received during Debra's 22-year term as director of the library, the Cairo Public Library has been nominated for this year's National Medal for Museum and Library Service.

That leads us into the second reason for this letter. Councilperson Tim Powers has made a public announcement on social media. His Facebook post is filled with inaccuracies and lies, and we wish to correct them. For those town board members who have not read his post on Facebook, it has been attached to this letter in its original form.

Mr. Powers stated that, "There are two other libraries with the same designation on the Mid-Hudson library system. Those being Greenville and Windham." **Wrong Mr. Powers.** There are **eight** municipal public libraries in the Mid-Hudson Library System, they are: Brewster, Cairo Greenville, Kent, Philmont, Pine Plains, Red Hook and Windham.

Mr. Powers further stated, "Upon checking with the other two libraries as to how they are operated, it is done according to the town guidelines that were established for ALL other operating departments inside the town structure." **Wrong, again Mr. Powers.** The Office of the State Comptroller has ruled on several occasions that it is the library Board of Trustees' fiduciary responsibility to have financial oversight over a municipal library's finances. This does not mean as you further claimed that the Town has no oversight of the library's finances. To the contrary, the Town can review library expenses at the monthly meeting of the library Board of Trustees. Ultimately, the town

determines how much money it contributes to the library's operating budget every year. As an example, while this year's town budget increased on average almost 10%, the library's budget was cut by 5% from the previous year's amount.

Mr. Powers stated "I discovered that our librarian is earning more than a senior librarian for THE CITY OF MANHATTAN whose salary comes in at \$60,200. The assistant librarian is at \$41,000 per year before benefits." This one sentence contains many **inaccuracies**. Let's begin with geography. Manhattan isn't a city. It is a borough in the City of New York. Debra Kamecke isn't a librarian, she is the Director of the Cairo Public Library. They are completely different jobs with different responsibilities. A librarian provides frontline service assisting patrons with research needs while a Library Director is the chief executive officer of the institution. The library director is responsible for the administration of the entire operation, from human resources management to facilities to carrying out the library board's policies, plans and budget. For the record, the Library Director for the borough of Manhattan makes well over \$500,000 per year. Also, for the record, our senior librarian has worked for more than 20 years to reach her current income of \$41,000 a year. The **starting** salary for a Manhattan senior librarian \$60,200. Using your example, they are both woefully underpaid.

Mr. Powers also stated, "During the Covid pandemic, the library was closed as most of the town offices were." A **Correction** to a misleading statement is needed. Although the library building was closed to walk-in traffic, the library and its staff continued to work providing curbside pick-up service via phone, email and online contact with Cairo, Catskill, and Greenville residents.

Mr. Powers also stated, "Upon contacting two different attorneys with these **facts** they both concur that the operation portion of this budget needs to be cut and I suggest that the library be given a choice to either come back into the town structure as they were originally chartered or seek operational funding elsewhere." Again, Mr. Powers deliberately skews established law for his own ends. Mr. Powers knows full well that in Cairo Public Library v Michael Valentin, the court clearly stated that under New York state law, a library board has broad collective authority to manage the affairs of the library. As originally chartered, it is the library board that has the fiduciary responsibility for the library budget. If Mr. Power's attorneys had been supplied with accurate and truthful information, they would have no choice but to reach the same conclusion. If Mr. Powers does not understand that ruling, we suggest he contact the two unnamed attorneys and ask them to explain it to him.

In closing, the Cairo Library Board of Trustees would like Councilperson Jason Watts, Councilperson Maryjo Cords, Councilperson Steve Kralovich and Supervisor John Coyne to publicly admonish Councilperson Tim Powers for his deliberately misleading statements on social media. A public official with **self-declared** "fiduciary responsibilities" also has the responsibility to be truthful and provide accurate information to the citizens he represents and should not be using public media to launch a personal attack on a town employee. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom." Our Constitutional Republic relies and depends on an informed electorate. Having a public official give out false information erodes public confidence.

Respectfully,

Library Board of Trustees

Greggor Petrovik – President

Edward Forrester

Mark Gorelick

Diana Benoit

Adrienne Pierce

Tim Powers

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From Cairo Town Councilman Tim Powers:

As one of five elected fiduciaries (town board), at budget time, we are faced with properly allocating tax payer funds for the operation of our town, but also are tasked with maintaining proper oversight as to how the funds are spent throughout the year using a voucher system that is maintained by the town book keeper. So upon discovering that one of our departments was in a "unique" situation when it came to receiving tax payer money, I decided to investigate and the information that I discovered is troubling at best.

At question here is one of the crown jewels of our community, The Cairo Municipal Public Library. While I fully support the Library as being a doorway to the mind with it's vast wealth of knowledge and community service, I have found that the current financial arrangement with the Town of Cairo is un-acceptable from a fiduciary stand point.

The Library was permanently chartered as a PUBLIC TOWN Library in 1973, by the NYS education department. There are two other libraries with the same designation on the Mid-Hudson library system. Those being Greenville and Windham. Upon checking with the other two libraries as to how they are operated, it is done according to the town guidelines that were established for ALL other operating departments in side the town structure. The town owns the library building, they use a voucher system, where expenditure vouchers are approved by the library board of trustees and then submitted to the town book keeper for payment. This allows for the town board to have continuous OVERSIGHT into the use of the taxpayer money that is budgeted to the library. Such is NOT the case with our library.

Back on January,13 1986, a resolution was adopted by the library board citing NYS education law 259(1) DEMANDING that the town treasurer turn over to the library all financial books, accounts, records and funds pertaining to the library. This case was adjudicated under an article 78 proceeding in Albany county Supreme court in which they ruled in favor of the library. The case was filed against then supervisor Michael Valentin and not the existing Cairo town board at the time. Upon the decision of the case, Supervisor Valentin complied with the demand without a resolution from the town board. Since 1986, The library has established their own payroll account, own health insurance package, and is currently in charge of all library operations including: hiring and firing, salaries, sick leave and vacation time. As a foot note, in an e-mail dated September 23, 2021, our town book keeper was informed that there are five libraries that are "not part of their town or village". Cairo Public Library, Catskill Public Library, Heermance Memorial Library, D.R. Evarts library and Hunter Public Library. The current arrangement with the town of Cairo for our library is this: they submit a budget, once approved by the town board, the town book keeper deducts the worker's compensation amount for a year, and HANDS THE LIBRARY A CHECK FOR THE BALANCE! WHERE IS THE OVERSIGHT? Our fiduciary responsibility has been thwarted! Just to put a number on this, the annual yearly cost to the taxpayer for the building that we provide alone is \$167,500. Top that with this year's operating budget of \$196,000, we have a total cost of \$363,500 per year. In which \$162,966 goes out in the SALARIES of seven people! In a small town of 6,700 people, (according to the last US Census), the cost to EVERY man, woman, and child in our community is \$54.25 per year. Just to put this

into perspective, the senior librarian is earning before benefits, \$70,000 per year, better than \$10,000 more than our police officer in charge or Ambulance administrator. Upon searching [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) for salary comparisons, I discovered that our librarian is earning more than a senior librarian for THE CITY OF MANHATTAN whose salary comes in at \$60,200. The assistant librarian is at \$41,000 per year before benefits.

During the Covid pandemic, the library was closed as most of the town offices were. Although the town did a department wide lay off or furlough, the library did not! In fact, they hired on a seventh employee. Was this all happening because of the lack of needed oversight by the town? This is exactly why I am stepping up with this information. This is my primary duty as your elected fiduciary to give you the facts, and I do have the documentation. Upon contacting two different attorneys with these facts, they both concur that the operating portion of this budget needs to be cut and I suggest that the library be given a choice to either come back into the town structure as they were originally chartered or seek operational funding elsewhere. In either circumstance, I believe that the town should continue to provide the building under the current arrangement continuing to absorb the cost as doing out part to support our library. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter and it is an absolute pleasure to serve you.