Approval by Library Board of Trustees

The Stevens Memorial Library Board of Trustees approved this strategic plan on June 25, 2015.

Edward T. Vitone, Chair
Margaret Whitney, Secretary
Paula Dowd

Margaret Donovan, Vice Chair
Paula St. Laurent Kuehl, Treasurer
Candace Wright

Emily Donnelly, Director
Acknowledgements

This strategic plan is the result of many hours of work on the part of many people. I wish to thank the library’s dedicated Board of Trustees, tireless Friends of the Library executive board, and outstanding staff. I owe an additional debt of gratitude to all 175 community members who took the time to fill out our survey, offering the library priceless insight into how we can improve our service to Ashburnham.

I would like to commend the members of the volunteer Strategic Planning Committee for their commitment and enthusiasm. A huge THANK YOU to

Kelly Hansen          Dottie Munroe
Matthew Holloway      Keith Penniman
Paula Kuehl           Duncan Phyfe
Rosemarie Meissner    David Uminski

I would especially like to thank Jeff Lawrence for all of his work preparing for and facilitating our Strategic Planning meetings. He truly went above and beyond to make sure that each meeting was a success.

Lastly, thank you to Elaine Gardner for generously reviewing a first draft of this document.

Respectfully,
Emily Donnelly, Director

Mission Statement

The Stevens Memorial Library supports its community through the provision of materials, programs, space, and technology to aid in the educational, cultural, and recreational development of its entire community. The library is committed to providing a welcoming space for Ashburnham citizens and residents of neighboring communities without regard to gender, race, age, religion, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.
Introduction

Ashburnham’s first library was established in 1793 through the sale of shares at two dollars apiece. This library managed to be self-supporting through the contributions of its members (and aided by share sales, financial and material donations, and book sales) until 1833, when it was disbanded. Its contents were distributed among its members. In 1850, “the [private] Ladies’ Library Association was organized and a collection of books of approved character was continued by renewals until 1884” (Stearns 534).

Ashburnham Town Meeting had established a public library in 1882, which was first housed in the post office and then moved to the Selectmen’s office. This library had extremely limited hours (Saturdays only) so as not to disrupt the Selectmen’s work. When the Ladies’ Library Association ended its work, remaining volumes in its collection were donated to the town, which spurred the town to appropriate $350 for new books.¹ The town continued to support the library for several years, and when former Town Clerk George Stevens passed away in 1887, the town embraced his request that a public library be built on the corner of Main and Water Streets. Furthermore, Mr. Stevens’ estate donated $10,000 to provide for the library’s construction and furnishings, and the grateful town decided to name the library after its generous benefactor. Moving quickly, the town was able to open the doors of the Stevens Memorial Library to the public on January 9, 1891.²

Ashburnham immediately embraced its library, providing limited but regular financial support, and the library’s number of users increased each year. Before long, a deposit collection was placed in South Ashburnham better to serve residents in that part of town. Gifts of money, books, and magazines were regularly bestowed upon the beloved library, and the Trustees scrambled to keep the building in good condition, purchase additional shelving at regular intervals, and meet the needs of a diverse town. Due to its location, the library was able to build strong relationships with the local schools, which were at that time within walking distance. Classes visited the library regularly, and older students spent their evenings studying at the library. In the 1940s, a “picture book corner” was developed to meet the increased demand by preschoolers and their families.

Over the years, the library has always emphasized finding innovative ways of engaging the community. In 1952, upon recognizing a dearth of recreational opportunities within Ashburnham for its youth, the library placed a game table in the children’s area. In 1959, the Stevens Memorial Library first joined a regional system to expand materials access. It began circulating films in 1963 (thanks to its relationship with the Fitchburg Public Library), and began circulating record albums in 1968. The first computer was purchased for staff use in 1987, and a public use computer was introduced five years later.

¹ Stearns, Ezra. S. History of Ashburnham, Massachusetts, from the grant of Dorchester Canada to the present time, 1734-1886: with a genealogical register of Ashburnham families. Ashburnham, MA: Published by the Town, 1887.
It is this legacy of service that continues to drive the Stevens Memorial Library today. Its focus remains on seeking new and more effective ways of serving its community. As it has since its beginning, the library looks to collections, programming, and other supplementary services to creatively fill any need it can for the town of Ashburnham. As the Board of Library Trustees noted in their 1913 annual report, "The public library of a town ought to be the centre [sic] of influence for the people and trustees will endeavor, as far as money permits, to make the Ashburnham library a means for benefiting and uplifting the community." This remains the mission that drives the library and will continue to do so for another several centuries.

**Planning Methodology**

This strategic plan was designed to follow the steps laid out by the Massachusetts Library System’s strategic planning process. After the director and three Trustees attended the MLS Strategic Planning Roundtable, the director formed a Strategic Planning Committee. This committee consisted of one Trustee, one Friend of the Library, a town selectman, a library staff member, and four community members. Community members included a high school student, a local parent, the high school principal, and a non-user of the library (who has since become a library user). Committee members ranged in age from 18 to 82, and had lived in town for a wide range of years. Each meeting was ably facilitated by a former town moderator, assisted by the library director.

In its first meeting, the Strategic Planning Committee held a brainstorming session using the Massachusetts Library System’s SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) system of analysis. This session provided an understanding of where the library stands today, its strengths and weaknesses, and a broad view of what it could be in the future. In its second meeting, the committee continued its work along MLS guidelines, creating a community vision and exploring how the library could support and help to make Ashburnham fit that vision. The group quickly saw that as an information center, there is little change that the library can’t help effect. It then put together some broad goals and a focused mission.

Between each strategic planning meeting, the Library Board of Trustees was consulted and given an opportunity to comment on progress and add their ideas. This was a wonderful opportunity to broaden the spectrum of views included in this process. The Trustees had previously created a vision for the library, and the Committee’s vision was found to be highly complementary to this earlier statement of vision.

The final information-gathering phase consisted of a community survey. Surveys were available online, at the library, at Town Hall, and at the local Athol Savings Bank for a period of two weeks. Of the 175 total surveys received, over 30 surveys were filled out at Ashburnham’s annual town meeting by library users and non-users alike. The majority of paper surveys were filled out at the library; no surveys were returned to town hall; two surveys were returned to the bank. Online surveys made up 28% of the survey feedback received. The survey was advertised

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3 See Appendix A.
on the library’s website, on its Facebook page, and through other organizations, such as the local parents’ Facebook group.

The results of all of these sessions were compiled by the library director and formulated into this document for approval by the Strategic Planning Committee, the Library Board of Trustees, and, ultimately, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

**Results**

The results of the Strategic Planning Committee’s first brainstorming session\(^4\) fell into six categories. They are

- Communication
- Physical Plant (including building and surrounding area)
- Programming (including outreach and collaboration)
- Personnel
- Technology
- Collection/materials

According to the results of this session, the library’s strengths lie in its staff and building. The library needs to improve the effectiveness of its communication efforts as well as its technological footprint. The group’s aspirations for the library primarily centered on communication and the physical plant. Much of the discussion focused on the role of technology in life and libraries today, with a strong sense that the library should be on the technological forefront. While the group struggled to identify measurable results without first creating specific goals (goal-creation was not part of the exercise), it felt that a successful library would be well-staffed and well-funded, and its success would be evident in community participation and attitudes.

The second Strategic Planning Committee meeting\(^5\) was focused on the creation of a community vision. To this end, the group first brainstormed its ideal Ashburnham, focusing on what the group felt the town should ideally provide to its citizens. These services were varied: a safe and welcoming atmosphere; a vibrant economy; a forward-thinking approach to planning; the conservation of natural resources. The Committee then asked whether the library could help the town provide each of these services. Almost without exception, the answer was yes. With this in mind, the committee worked to list concrete actions that the library can take to support its community vision. The group focused on three priority areas:

1. Make the library more welcoming
2. Expand the library’s role in education
3. Improve communication and community connection

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\(^4\) See Appendix C.
\(^5\) See Appendix C.
In fleshing out how to achieve these aims, the committee was able to identify its overall goal for the future of the Stevens Memorial Library. The strategic planning committee’s community vision is

*The Stevens Memorial Library will be the information gateway of our community for reading and research, access to technology, and programs for all that meet the 21st century needs of our town.*

This vision has a significant overlap with the Trustees’ draft vision statement. That vision reads, in part, “The Stevens Memorial Library aspires to be the educational, technological, and cultural hub of the Ashburnham community.”

Many of the findings and comments of the Strategic Planning Committee and the Trustees were mirrored in the survey results. In particular, there is a definite desire within the community for the library to take on the role of community center and, especially, to expand and improve its services to adults: 39% of respondents requested adult educational programming; 51% requested cultural programming such as concerts, lectures, and performances. Survey respondents were primarily library users and primarily residents of Ashburnham. Two-thirds of respondents were women and two-thirds were over the age of 45. Respondents clearly did not provide a completely accurate representation of the demographics of Ashburnham. Further concerns about survey results include responses from non-users who are clearly unaware of changes that have occurred since the recent change in administration. Similarly, one must wonder whether a significant minority of current library users being satisfied with current hours indicates that hours are satisfactory, or if the administration should place greater emphasis on requests for change, which are more likely to originate from non-users.

However, all sources of information-gathering resulted in guidance for improvements to the library. In-person discussions (Strategic Planning Committee, Trustees) consistently emphasized increasing accessibility, warmth, technology, collaboration, and communication. In conversation, Ashburnham residents have repeatedly asked for hours to include weekends; recent forays into adult programming have been well-received and well-attended.

**Community Profile**

Ashburnham is a small, rural community of 6,1196 nestled in the hills of north central Massachusetts, bordering New Hampshire. Established in 1736, Ashburnham remains a primarily residential community, with a population that swells in the summer. It is rather racially homogeneous (94% white), and has both an even gender distribution (49% female, 51% male) and a rather even age distribution (25% under 20, 29% aged 21-44, 27% aged 45-59, 20% aged 60 and over). According to the projections of the UMass Donahue Institute, however, this age distribution is expected to change in the near future, with growth of Ashburnham’s senior community eventually overtaking every other age group.7

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6 U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey
Economically, Ashburnham is primarily considered “middle class,” with median earnings by occupation ranging from approximately $12,000 for those in food preparation and related careers to over $50,000 for those in business and financial management. The median household income (2009-2013) in Ashburnham is $83,532 (in 2013 dollars), with a per capita income for that same period of $34,454. This is consistent with a community with Ashburnham’s level of educational attainment: approximately 97% of Ashburnham residents over the age of 25 have at least a high school degree; 34% have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Current Library Services

The Stevens Memorial Library is open 40 hours a week: Mondays & Wednesdays, 10-8; Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-4. It has approximately 20,000 books for all ages from infant through adult, including large print and reference materials. The library’s collection also includes print magazines, newspapers, museum passes, a small (but growing) collection of audiobooks, and over 3,000 DVDs. This spring, we expanded our collection into e-resources, with subscriptions to TumbleBooks, Rosetta Stone, Zinio, and Universal Class.

The library has two storytimes a week during the school year: a playgroup run by the Ashburnham Westminster Coordinated Family and Community Engagement program and a more traditional preschool storytime run by library volunteers. Other regular library programs include a monthly adult book club, a six-week summer reading program for all ages (children through adults), and school vacation programming for children. The library provides meeting space during library hours at no cost to users, internet access through five public access computers, and a preservation room that contains the library’s local history collection. The library is handicapped accessible, with elevator access to all floors and multiple handicapped accessible bathrooms.

Oversight of library administration and its services fall to the library’s six-member Board of Trustees. This board is elected by Ashburnham residents on a rotating basis. Each year, one-third of the library’s Board is up for re-election of his or her three-year term. The library has, for the past several years, operated with one full-time director and two part-time library assistants (one at 28 hours a week; one at 20 hours a week). Because the library is open 40 hours a week, it has relied on the use of substitutes and volunteers to make sure that there are at least two people working at any given time. This short-staffing has had a negative impact on the amount of programming that has been offered, as well as the library’s efficacy in some of its basic maintenance responsibilities such as weeding.

A new library director was hired in October of 2014, and with this new change in leadership, the library has undertaken a number of major projects. While the new director and the Trustees worked together to exhaustively rewrite the library’s policies and procedures (especially those relating to finances), it was determined that a temporary employee should be hired to weed

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8 Source: US Bureau of the Census
the library’s collection in order to speed the library’s transformation. This employee was hired, and at the end of 281 hours, the library was reborn. According to last year’s Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) report, our overflowing collection included nearly 40,000 items at the end of June 2014. A significant proportion of these items were out of date, in terrible condition, or full of misinformation. Today, our collection is closer to 27,000 items. There is space at the end of each shelf, the library is full of more sunlight, and patrons have remarked at the incredible number of new and attractive items.

Other projects that have been instituted this year include the addition of the aforementioned e-resources, improved relationships with other community organizations and town departments, and the successful lobbying for a full-time library assistant position (expected to begin July 2015). We have expanded programming by introducing adult programs and offering programs to students over school vacation weeks. The project that we expect to have the most impact, however, is the working towards goals established as a result of this strategic planning process.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Make the library more welcoming

Objective 1.1 Adjust hours better to meet community needs
Objective 1.2 Re-design library layout to include lounge area(s) and other inviting features

Goal 2: Expand the library’s role in education

Objective 2.1 Collaborate with schools to support extracurricular activities
Objective 2.2 Develop relationships with school faculty and staff to improve curricular support
Objective 2.3 Create formal and informal educational programming for adults

Goal 3: Leverage new and traditional means to serve as the information hub of Ashburnham

Objective 3.1 Standardize and expand means of advertising to reach the broadest possible spectrum of citizens
Objective 3.2 Collaborate with other town organizations and departments to provide a central point through which all community information flows
Objective 3.3 Improve access to Preservation Room and its contents
Goal 4: Become a leader in technological developments and offerings

Objective 4.1 Use social media and relevant emergent technologies to improve communication with the community

Objective 4.2 Investigate best uses of technological trends to educate and entertain community

Objective 4.3 Evaluate and expand e-resource offerings to community

Goal 5: Revitalize Friends of the Library

Objective 5.1 Collaborate with Friends' executive board to recruit and retain a larger and broader spectrum of volunteers to create a self-sustaining Friends organization

Goal 6: Offer programs, materials, and services that meet the needs of residents of all ages

Objective 6.1 Collaborate with local service organizations to reach and serve a broader audience

Objective 6.2 Create regular adult programming

Objective 6.3 Expand print, audio-visual, and electronic resources to meet needs of currently underserved populations

Objective 6.4 Collaborate with schools and other organizations to establish successful teen programming

Objective 6.5 Investigate service options to serve homebound population

Objective 6.6 Become a center for technological training for individuals of all ages, abilities, and interests
First Year Action Plan (FY 2016)

Goal 1: Make the library more welcoming

Objective 1.1 Adjust hours to better meet community needs
  Action 1: Hire additional staff to increase overall staff size (July 2015)
  Action 2: Amend current staff schedules to accommodate being open on Saturdays (Fall 2015)
  Action 3: Adjust library hours to meet requests for Saturday hours (Fall 2015)

Objective 1.2 Re-design library layout to include lounge area(s) and other inviting features
  Action 1: Invite Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) for space analysis to improve use of building (Winter/Spring 2016)
  Action 2: Begin research of furniture options for lounge area(s) and more accessible shelving (Spring 2016)

Goal 2: Expand the library’s role in education

Objective 2.1 Collaborate with schools to support extracurricular activities
  Action 1: Co-coach Briggs Elementary’s FIRST LEGO League Robotics team (August-December 2015)

Objective 2.2 Develop relationships with school faculty and staff to improve curricular support
  Action 1: Educate faculty about what resources the library can offer them and their students by attending a faculty meeting or other training opportunity if possible (Fall 2015)

Objective 2.3 Create formal and informal educational programming for adults
  Action 1: Teach “Introduction to E-Resources” courses (Summer 2015, Spring 2016)

Goal 3: Leverage new and traditional means to serve as the information hub of Ashburnham

Objective 3.1 Standardize and expand means of advertising to reach the broadest possible spectrum of citizens
  Action 1: Create and use Twitter account (Summer 2015)
  Action 2: Create and implement protocols for the issuing of press releases for all library events (Summer/Fall 2015)

Goal 4: Become a leader in technological developments and offerings
Objective 4.3 Evaluate and expand e-resource offerings to community
  Action 1: Join C/W MARS (Winter 2015-2016)

Goal 5: Revitalize Friends of the Library
  Objective 5.1 Collaborate with Friends executive board to recruit and retain a larger and broader spectrum of volunteers to create a self-sustaining Friends organization
    Action 1: Attend all Friends of the Library meetings (entire FY)
    Action 2: Guide the Friends in developing, clarifying, and advertising their official mission (Winter 2015-2016)

Goal 6: Offer programs, materials, and services that meet the needs of residents of all ages
  Objective 6.2 Create regular adult programming
    Action 1: Offer at least one adult program a month (entire FY)
  Objective 6.3 Expand print, audio-visual, and electronic resources to meet needs of currently underserved populations
    Action 1: Join C/W MARS (Winter 2015-2016)
Appendix B: Community Survey Results

Do you have a library card?

- Yes: 145 (82.4%)
- No: 25 (14.2%)
- Not sure: 6 (3.4%)

Do you live in Ashburnham?

- Yes: 155 (88.1%)
- No: 21 (11.9%)

How often do you visit the library?

- Once a week or more: 46 (26.1%)
- Once or twice a month: 76 (43.2%)
- Once or twice a year: 36 (20.5%)
- Less than once a year: 9 (5.1%)
- Never: 9 (5.1%)
## What prevents you from using the library more?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpleasant past experience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpleasant p...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in the habit of using the library</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in the ha...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate collection</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate c...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use another library</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use another l...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of parking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is nothing preventing me from using it more</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is noth...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**“OTHER” comments:**

1. "Nothing” or “N/A” (~50%)
2. “Too busy,” or “no Saturday hours” (~30%)

Remaining answers included a preference for owning books to borrowing them, that we are not members of C/W MARS, and that people prefer online resources and eBooks.
We'd like to expand the number and type of programs that we offer. What programs would you attend at the library?

- Preschool/infant programs: 21 (11.9%)
- After school programs -- elementary: 32 (18.2%)
- After school programs -- middle school: 16 (9.1%)
- After school programs -- high school: 18 (10.2%)
- Book discussion groups: 36 (20.5%)
- Adult education (computers, retirement, hobbies, etc.): 68 (38.6%)
- Concerts, lectures, performances: 89 (50.6%)
- Daytime programs: 26 (14.8%)
- Evening programs: 71 (40.3%)
- Other: 40 (22.7%)

"OTHER" comments:

1. "Not sure" or "N/A" (~50%)
2. "Book discussion" (~10%)

Remaining answers included specific requests like yoga, art, Saturday hours, or book sales.
Where do you get information about community events?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization's website</td>
<td>39 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>77 (43.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>5 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local newspapers</td>
<td>55 (31.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>93 (52.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyers</td>
<td>50 (28.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television/local cable</td>
<td>11 (6.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>25 (14.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"OTHER" comments:

1. "Not sure" or "N/A" (~50%)
2. School, town hall, family members (~10% each)

Remaining answers included light bill and "signs."
Our current hours are Mon/Wed: 10-8; Tue/Thu: 10-5; Fri: 10-4. If we were to open on Saturdays, which weekday hours would you be willing to sacrifice?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday/Wed...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday eve...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The current...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Monday/Wednesday mornings: 52 (29.5%)
- Monday evenings: 30 (17%)
- Wednesday evenings: 22 (12.5%)
- Tuesday: 11 (6.3%)
- Thursday: 7 (4%)
- Friday: 13 (7.4%)
- The current hours are perfect. Don't change a thing: 37 (21%)
- Other: 42 (23.9%)

"OTHER" comments:

1. "Not sure" or "N/A" (~70%)
2. "Don't cut – just add" (~10%)

Remaining answers included "increase evening hours instead" and repetitions of standard answers already given.
I identify as...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My age is...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-64</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 or older</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Strategic Planning Committee Notes

Strategic Planning: Meeting One  
March 30, 2015

The Stevens Memorial Library Strategic Planning Committee had its first meeting at 6:30pm on Monday, March 30th. Members in attendance were Emily Donnelly (Library Director), Keith Penniman (Library Assistant), Paula Kuehl (Library Board of Trustees), Dottie Munroe (Friends of the Library), David Uminski (Oakmont principal, former Town Moderator), Rosemarie Meissner (community member), and Duncan Phyfe (Board of Selectmen). Two other community members were unable to attend the meeting due to illness or last-minute schedule conflicts. One member of the committee does not have a library card; another member has lived in town for more than ten years and got a library card after having been invited to join the committee. The meeting was facilitated by Ashburnham resident Jeff Lawrence (former Town Moderator, retired educator).

The committee's brainstorming session was the result of conducting a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) analysis, as is suggested by the Massachusetts Library System. The results of this brainstorming session fell into 6 categories. They are

- Communication
- Physical Plant (including building and surrounding area)
- Programming (including outreach and collaboration)
- Personnel
- Technology
- Collection/materials

According to the results of this session, the library's strengths lie in its staff and building. The library needs to improve the effectiveness of its communication efforts as well as its technological footprint. The group's aspirations for the library primarily centered on communication and the physical plant. Much of the discussion focused on the role of technology in life and libraries today, with a strong sense that the library should be on the technological forefront. While the group struggled to identify measurable results without first creating specific goals (goal-creation was not part of the exercise), it felt that a successful library would be well-staffed and well-funded, and its success would be evident in community participation and attitudes.
### Brainstorm Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Aspirations</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Friendly, helpful staff</td>
<td>- Increase hours, staff</td>
<td>- E-books</td>
<td>- More patrons in library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Availability of meeting space</td>
<td>- More teen programs</td>
<td>- Be a technological forerunner</td>
<td>- Train and supervise volunteers to be more effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Location</td>
<td>- More programs for adults, seniors, children</td>
<td>- Active community and information center</td>
<td>- Up-to-date with technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Beautiful building</td>
<td>- Improve communications: churches, newspapers, other media</td>
<td>- Go beyond library walls</td>
<td>- Adequate staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Long history in town and town support</td>
<td>- Want alerts to “come to me”</td>
<td>- Community garden in former VMS school location</td>
<td>- Community excited about library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Friends of the Library</td>
<td>- Twitter and Instagram</td>
<td>- Changing table</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Dedicated trustees</td>
<td>- Technology, social media</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Preservation Room</td>
<td>- Space poorly laid out and utilized</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Story time</td>
<td>- E-books access; other downloadables</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Book Club</td>
<td>- 3-D printer</td>
<td>- Active community and information center</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Summer Reading Program</td>
<td>- “Maker” space</td>
<td>- Go beyond library walls</td>
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<tr>
<td>- People get their materials promptly</td>
<td>- Electronic marquis or sandwich board</td>
<td>- Community garden in former VMS school location</td>
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<td>- Changing table</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Desire to improve</td>
<td>- Parking</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- SOAR meeting</td>
<td>- Nooks; cozy spots to read</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Memories of the Dolly Whitney Adams School</td>
<td>- Coffee shop and snacks</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Can always find something to read</td>
<td>- Elderly transport to library</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Public computers</td>
<td>- Homebound services</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- DVD collection</td>
<td>- Senior bookmobile</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Cleanliness</td>
<td>- Lack of money</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Well-built</td>
<td>- Better ILL with C/W MARS</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Interlibrary loans</td>
<td>- Audio player for music CDs</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Welcoming to all</td>
<td>- Integration with schools</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Elevator/ handicapped access</td>
<td>- No link to library on Town home page</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The community</td>
<td>- One-way traffic flow is inconvenient</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Volunteers</td>
<td>- More collaboration with other organizations</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Audio collection (music and books)</td>
<td>- Index artifacts</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Street sign (directional)</td>
<td>- Beer in library</td>
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Strategic Planning: Meeting Two
April 27, 2015

The Stevens Memorial Library Strategic Planning Committee had its second meeting at 6:30pm on Monday, April 27. All members were in attendance: Emily Donnelly (Library Director), Keith Penniman (Library Assistant), Paula Kuehl (Library Board of Trustees), Dottie Munroe (Friends of the Library), David Uminski (Oakmont principal, former Town Moderator), Rosemarie Meissner (community member), Kelly Hansen (community member), Matthew Holloway (Oakmont student), and Duncan Phyfe (Board of Selectmen). The meeting was again ably facilitated by Jeff Lawrence.

This meeting was focused on the creation of a community vision. To this end, the group first brainstormed their ideal Ashburnham, focusing on what they felt the town should ideally provide to its citizens. These services were varied: a safe and welcoming atmosphere; a vibrant economy; a forward-thinking approach to planning; and the conservation of natural resources. The Committee then asked whether the library could help the town provide each of these services. Almost without exception, the answer was yes. With this in mind, the committee worked to list concrete actions that the library can take in its role of supporting its community vision. The group focused on three areas that it felt the library should prioritize:

1. Make the library more welcoming
2. Expand the library’s role in education
3. Improve communication and community connection

In fleshing out how to achieve these aims, the committee was able to identify its overall goal for the future of the Stevens Memorial Library. The strategic planning committee’s community vision is

The Stevens Memorial library will be the information gateway of our community for reading and research, access to technology, and programs for all that meet the 21st century needs of our town.
Brainstorm Results

What does the Town need to provide? (An “L” indicates that the library can play a role.)
- Welcoming atmosphere - L
- Public safety – L (information)
- Quality, free, and appropriate K-12 education – L (all ages)
- More business; vibrant local economy – L (gathering space, e.g. for creatives)
- Services for infrastructure, e.g. roads
- Gas station
- More support for Oakmont extra-curricular activities – L
- Parks, library, cultural and recreational programs and services for all ages – L
- Conservation land; shepherd natural resources – L (e.g. summer program)
- More unified, cohesive, engaged community – L
- Forward-thinking vs. crisis-oriented – L
- Consistency, roots, heritage – L
- Keeping town cleaner and litter-free – L (public relations)
- Sense of connection and communication – L
- Strategic partnership with Cushing Academy – L

How to make the library more welcoming
- Greet patrons with a smile
- Be open more when convenient for patrons, e.g. Saturdays
- Coffee shop
- WiFi
- Lounge area
- Teen hangout area
- Activities and programs broadcast on AWCA TV

Library’s role in education
- Collaboration with schools
- Keep materials collection up to date, take requests from patrons, and plan for the future
- Provide information about “public law,” e.g. open meeting law
- Programs for all ages, e.g. Great Decisions
- Be a resource center for volunteers who will work in schools
- Spread technological resources

Communication and Connection
- Collaboration with schools
- Utilize social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Communication network and framework to reach different ages and constituencies, e.g. information center, community calendar, Code
- Red or automated email, website, electric bill flyer (put community calendar on back or message on bill on how to access it)
- Teach 21st century communication skills
- Morning announcements at the schools and on Channel 9

Goal
The Stevens Memorial library will be the information gateway of our community for reading and research, access to technology, and programs for all that meet the 21st century needs of our town.