



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Local public libraries awarded state grants

THOMAS F. O'MARA October 7, 2022

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**Elmira, N.Y., October 7**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) and Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning) today announced that public libraries in Schuyler, Steuben and Yates counties have been awarded state library construction grants.

O'Mara and Palmesano said the grants are awarded through the state's Library Construction Grant Program, which is distributing \$14 million in capital funds from the 2020-21 state

budget for this year's awards to libraries throughout New York.

In a joint statement, O'Mara and Palmesano said, "A public library is a fundamental resource for area families, seniors, and countless other community residents. That point has been driven home like never before throughout the COVID-19 response when our public libraries have been centers of public outreach and information. We are always hopeful that these grants will help local libraries better afford and address their renovation needs. Public libraries, especially in many rural, upstate communities and regions, are New York's leading digital literacy educators, just one of many vital community roles our libraries fulfill. This role is likely to expand in future years. These ongoing investments will help more and more of our public libraries stay ahead of the curve to continue meeting the increasing demand. It's an investment in education, economic growth and quality communities."

According to the New York State Library, which administers the grants, surveys have estimated that the cost of public library construction and renovation needs statewide totals more than \$1.5 billion. More than 50% of the over 1,000 public library buildings across New York are over 60 years old. Another 33% are more than three decades old. Many of the state's local public libraries are unable to accommodate users with disabilities, and cannot provide Internet, computer, and other electronic technologies to users because of outdated and inadequate electrical wiring. They also do not have sufficient space to house the library's collection and lack sufficient space for public access computers.

The construction grants help libraries and library systems make renovations and upgrades, including broadband infrastructure, update electrical wiring to accommodate computer technology, renovate facilities to provide wheelchair accessible entrances and become fully accessible to persons with disabilities, and provide community meeting rooms.

O'Mara and Palmesano announced the following grants to area libraries:

- > **Arkport Public Library** (Steuben County), \$63,792 for exterior work to gain energy efficiencies, and interior work to improve accessibility and gain energy efficiencies, including the renovation of public spaces;
- > **Cohocton Public Library** (Steuben County), \$37,469 for Community Room renovations to improve overall space availability and accessibility as well as increase energy efficiencies;
- > **Dormann Library** (Bath, Steuben County), \$48,750 to complete the library's roof replacement;
- > **Southeast Steuben County Library** (Corning, Steuben County), \$95,925 for the installation of Solar Shades, window replacements, and a cargo elevator upgrade;
- > **Wimodaughasian Free Library** (Canisteo, Steuben County), \$9,862 to renovate a storage room and install a public space kitchen to support programs, and to install an ADA accessible bathroom;
- > **Watkins Glen School District Free Public Library** (Schuyler County), \$212,348 for the removal and replacement of all existing roof materials, replacement of two roof exhaust penetrations, and supervision and project management.
- > **Dundee Library** (Yates County), \$59,958 to upgrade the library's HVAC system, original (1920) storm and wood-sash windows (1977), and lighting, and rebuild exterior concrete stairs.

**O'Mara is a past recipient of the "Outstanding Advocate for Libraries Award" from the New York Library Association (NYLA).** In 2015, O'Mara and Palmesano sponsored a new law (Chapter 480 of the Laws of 2015) that, for the first time, included "installation and infrastructure of broadband services" as a specific project category eligible to receive funding through the Library Construction Grant Program. Prior to the law's enactment, libraries were unable to access funding through the popular grant program specifically for broadband purposes

including cable, wiring and modems, and network terminals and access points.