

## **The facts about charitable funds that support the Wareham Free Library**

We believe it is important for everyone to know the facts about charitable donations that support the Wareham Free Library and various organizations that support our library.

### **Fact:**

The Wareham Free Library is and has been supported each year with funds that have been donated over a long period of time and managed for the exclusive purpose of supporting our local library.

It has literally taken over 100 years to build-up, invest and manage these funds which provide a modest endowment for the benefit of the library. Our trust funds are modest --- much less than many town library endowments. These funds have been well-managed and invested by a charitable organization – the Wareham Free Library, Inc. – for the past 70 years. The funds now reside with the Wareham Library Foundation, a group that was set up a little over a year ago, at the recommendation of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. Many public libraries are setting up foundations as a means to increase fundraising efforts and serve as charitable conduit to support public libraries. This is considered a “good practice” by libraries across the state.

### **Fact:**

Every year—in fact every single year for the past 66 years – these charitable funds have been used to support the Wareham Free Library. Last year alone, \$25,000 was used to purchase books and other materials for the Wareham Free Library. This year again, the Foundation will make a substantial donation to support library operations. In fact, on average, the income from these funds has provided at least 10 percent of the Wareham Free Library’s operating budget as a supplement to the municipal appropriation.

What these funds cannot do is be used to take the place of public funding for libraries. Public funding of libraries, just like education, is essential. The Board of Library Commissioners will not count charitable funds as part of a Municipal Appropriation Requirement needed to keep a library certified. If the town chooses to enact the devastating cuts to the library, which make Wareham one of the most poorly funded libraries in the state, then we will lose certification, whether we have charitable funds or not.

In addition to that, wiping out trust funds to support a library for just one or two years could be devastating to the future of the library. It took over 100 years to build these funds. They haven't just been sitting there. A substantial sum solely from income has been used to support the library every year. One of the major goals of the town of Wareham has been to rebuild its "rainy day" fund. It makes no sense at all for the Wareham Library Foundation to totally empty a fund that has successfully supported the library.

**Fact:**

The Friends of the Wareham Free Library, Inc. was given the Spinney Memorial Building in Onset on the condition that it would be turned into a public library that would eventually be given to the town at a town meeting. The Friends' Spinney Building Committee has raised over \$700,000 to date. All funds raised for the Spinney Library is not only kept in a separate bank account, but it is kept in a separate bank from the general Friends' accounts. Indeed, the generous individuals, businesses and organizations who have donated money specifically to that fund, expects and will certainly have those funds spent solely on the Spinney building. It would be illegal to use them for another purpose.

**Fact:**

Richard Wheeler, a philanthropist who generously supports many causes that benefit Wareham, has started a Paddlethon to raise awareness and exclusive support for the Wareham Free Library. A special account has been established for these funds and every single penny will go to the main library. It's not only irresponsible, it's a very damaging lie, to suggest otherwise.

The Friends of the Wareham Free Library, Inc. guarantees you that all money donated to the Paddlethon or to the donation cans that can be found in local businesses will be used solely for the benefit of restoring the main libraries services.

Our beautiful library is threatened by the most severe budget cuts in its history. It needs our support now and in the future – not just financially but as a clear priority for adequate public funding. A 64 percent cut over the past three years is more than excessive. Only a small handful of the 380 other libraries in our entire state have suffered such draconian cuts and all

have become decertified. Other surrounding towns, like Bourne and Middleboro for example, also face the same revenue challenges that Wareham does. But no one has chosen as a remedy to cut their public library budget by 64 percent.

There is no need to pit the library against public safety or any other town department. The library makes up a miniscule part of the town budget – it formerly was one percent and is now even less than that. In the latest round of cuts, the library was slashed by 47 percent – with no public debate or discussion. Other town departments were cut by an average of eight percent. Some actually received increases. In fact, Wareham now is spending almost double on legal fees than it spends to support our library.

It will not require a great deal of funds to restore some library services and give us a fighting chance to retain certification.

These aren't opinions. They are facts. And they are what we need to consider and debate as we decide the future of our town.

For more information on the Paddlethon to support the Wareham Free Library visit our web site at **[warehampaddle.wordpress.com](http://warehampaddle.wordpress.com)**