

Kathleen M Kilgore

I am a Trustee at North Hampton Public Library.

I opposed this proposed Bill for so many reasons, these are some of the main reasons:

Potential for Political Influence:

I have experienced first-hand our Select Boards and Town Administrator over a 10+ year period prioritizing political optics over the needs, best interests, and desires for a new library and the continued funding of the library. During the annual budget process and funding of our library, we continue to see these attempts to prioritize their political optics. Attempting to shift funding and use of facilities to Parks and Rec, trying to charge for the use of spaces, or claiming the need to reduce the total town budget and impact on our residents. Our budget averages just 5% of the town's total budget for any given year, reducing it or eliminating it does not move the need much. Our Select Board sets a bottom-line budget; our Board of Trustees have autonomy over how those funds are spent. Removing this buffer allows the Select Board to micromanage library spending or reduce specific services or maintenance mid-year. This is prohibited under the governance of the Trustees.

Threat to Intellectual Freedom:

The library's role is to be a neutral, non-partisan sources of information. Entrusting library control to a Select Board rather than to a Board of Trustees can lead to administrative and ethical challenges. The Trustees are guided by the Library Bill of Rights which protects the public's right to access diverse viewpoints. Select boards may be more likely to censor or restrict materials that some groups of citizens find objectionable.

Loss of Specialized Expertise:

Library Trustees bring specific strengths and skills centered / focused on library science knowledge, community information needs, financial management and staffing needs and training.

Dedicated Advocacy:

Trustees are a vital link and independent advocate for the library. Unlike the Select Board they do not have a vested interest in multiple town departments and unions. They are solely focused on adequate funding for the library using municipal and private funding sources.