

Ron Jacobs

President AFSCME 1343

March 20, 2022

Members of the Burlington Parks, Arts and Culture Committee,

I am writing in regards to the temporary public library branch in the New North End. As a person who recently retired from library work after almost forty years, including three and a half years at Fletcher Free Library, I believe I understand the topics of this letter. As a long time resident of the Burlington area, I am very happy this endeavor is finally underway. It is my hope that the City Council and the Mayor will move forward on making the New North End branch permanent.

However, as the president of AFSCME 1343—the union that represents non-administrative/non-supervisory library employees—I have some major concerns with the current staffing. Right now, there is no permanent staffer running the branch. Instead, it is being staffed by current staff who are adding it to their current workload along with volunteers. This is not sustainable. This current situation involves both union and non-union City employees. Also, while the union commends the commitment of the volunteers working at the branch, it opposes them performing tasks that should be performed by paid staff with benefits, job protections and union representation.

It is because those jobs should be done by regular city employees not already assigned to work at the still-very-busy downtown library that I request (with AFSCME 1343 behind me) that any proposals to make the New North End Branch permanent include one union eligible employee (at least 20 hrs./week) assigned to the branch, but under the direction of the administration/management of the Downtown Library. We would also like to see other regular positions added as the library branch expands its hours and services. Those positions should not be filled by volunteers.

Once again, as President of AFSCME 1343, I respectfully request that this committee use whatever powers invested in it to insist that any proposal to make the New North End Library Branch permanent

include the funding of a permanent union-eligible position of at least 20 hours/week. This position's primary task would be coordinating the daily operations of that Branch. If such a position is not included in the proposal, I request that you work with the Mayor's office, City Council, the Fletcher Free Library administration and other relevant entities to include it. AFSCME 1343 is more than happy to support this endeavor. I have already written City Council members regarding this. Fletcher Free Library is known for and prides itself on its helpful, well-informed, educated and friendly staff. Insisting that some of that staff work outside of the jobs they were hired for in addition to those jobs could potentially damage their reputation.

We all know that creating this position as a permanent union-eligible position with benefits and protections is not going to be the difference in the city's economic future. The cost this position would demand is well worth the quality of services it would mean.

With all of us working together on this, I believe this path is the surest one to a successful branch and a legacy to be proud of.

Thanks for your time,

Ron Jacobs

AFSCME 1343 President

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