

# Library board gives \$500G to Middletown

## Mayor: Contribution will spare layoffs

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Written by Nina Rizzo

**MIDDLETOWN** — The township library's board of trustees agreed Wednesday to contribute nearly \$500,000 to the township in an effort to defray local property taxes.

In a split vote, the board agreed to release \$499,947 in library reserves. Board president Randall Gabrielan and trustee Gregory Milne voted against the resolution.

Mayor Anthony Fiore said the library's contribution will spare further layoffs of township employees. Some 26 township workers, including the 10 police department and 13 in the parks and recreation department, received 26 pink slips earlier Wednesday.

"I'm very happy," Fiore said of the board's decision. "If we had not gotten that money, there would have been more layoffs."

Several board members said the library trustees should honor a deal negotiated by library and township administrators and their attorneys. Under the deal, the Township Committee would not make any further financial requests this year and it would not seek to turn the library over to the Monmouth County Library System. The township would also include the library in a townshipwide alternative energy study.

The sticking point in the deal, however, was the township's willingness to include the library's planned parking lot expansion into the township's road project plan. The economy of scale was expected to bring the project cost down, but trustees squawked at bonding for the project.

Trustee Sherry Miloscia was concerned about bonding for the parking lot project when the library could pay for it in cash.

Gabrielan interjected: "Are you comfortable turning over money you saved for the parking lot and then paying for the parking lot again?"

Trustee Majorie Cavalier cajoled the board into voting for the amended deal, saying the township's governing bodies need to come together in difficult economic times.

"This is a bitter pill to swallow, but in desperate times you have to do things you find undesirable," she said.

The attorneys agreed to change the contract language to allow the library to pay up front, if it desires.


Gabrielan had initially proposed that the board contribute \$250,000, which he said was a "reasonable" amount, but Milne was the only other trustee to support that plan.

"I believe this resolution represents a denial of our fiduciary responsibility to this library and it's certainly not in our best interest," he said before casting his dissenting vote.

Under the deal, the township made \$66,000 in 2009 budget surplus available to the library. That money was injected into the revised library budget at the meeting.

During the public comment period, several residents said they were reluctant to see the library transfer its funds to the township.

Linda Baum said township officials should have to prove they've been prudent with the funds they already have. "I'm not sure that's the case," she said.

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