

# Council officially names Morrissey to library job

## COUNCIL

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mended rate was well below the town's levy limit under Proposition 27.

Under state law, Southbridge could shift up to half of its tax burden to businesses, but he recommended against that, saying doing so is "short-sighted" and cannot be easily reversed in the future. Because of the economy, business property actually gained in value, while the effect on residences was mixed — single and two-family homes lost some value, but multi-family homes dropped even more,

Cournoyer said. He did not, however, present figures for those categories.

Compared to the rest of Massachusetts, he noted, Southbridge tax rate last year was "in the lowest 13 percent," nearly \$1,600 below the statewide average.

Also unanimously, the council formally elevated Margaret Morrissey to the library director's job; she had been holding it on an interim basis since her predecessor James Patterson left in August. Her contract is for three years.

"I just want to keep going where we're going for now,"

Morrissey said afterward, praising the staff for their work. "My predecessors have set a good atmosphere and pace. They put the library on the map in this state."

In other business, they approved allowing the Memorial Hall project on Main Street to apply for a state Community Development Block Grant.

Owned by Colm Cryan, that project aims to renovate the building at the corner of Main and Chapin streets into commercial space with two floors of apartments above it. It has been vacant around 10 years, and Cryan said the

property had suffered serious water damage from that neglect.

"The need to act is self-evident," he said. "... When I acquired the property, it was in quite a state of distress."

Since starting work earlier this year, Cryan hopes to restore the façade to its art deco look of the 1920s and '30s and preserve a variety of old features inside and out. He also plans to install sustainable technology that will make the building energy and water efficient so it can meet the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification. If he succeeds, he said, it will probably be the first so certified building in town.

According to Alice Boyd, the grant will help build the four affordable units on the second floor. It will be

worth between \$400,000 and \$700,000; Boyd said they would firm up the numbers this morning.

The project got a boost from Downtown Partnership President Ronald Chernitsky, who said the council needs to "send a message to the business community."

"Any time you get private investment in your community, you want to fight for it," he said.

Externally, downtown is beautiful, he said, but "the inside of a lot of these buildings is not great."

Council

Chairwoman Catherine Nikolla agreed, saying Cryan's effort has made many people "breathe a sign of relief" because the building "has been hanging by its thumbs."

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