

Olney, MD
July 17, 2009

Mr. Phil Andrews
President, Montgomery County Council
Rockville, MD
Via e-mail

Dear Councilman Andrews,

On behalf of the Montgomery Library Board, I'm writing to ask the Council to approve the appropriation necessary for the County to reimburse the city of Rockville for parking expenses related to the use of the Town Center garage.

While we are aware that there is a difference of opinion on this subject, it is our view that the county should not put up barriers to the use of any library, much less the county library in Rockville that provides services that reach far beyond its location. The special collections related to disability, to children and to Federal documents are resources that attract patrons from across our area.

There is a larger factor at play here also. As numerous news stories, from the Washington Post to the New York Times to NBC News have reported over the past few months, library use growing rapidly as libraries across the country provide services for segments of the population that never before needed them. Internet access, necessary to find and apply for jobs, is provided for those who are out of work. Language and other programs help with the socialization of our residents from different part of the world. Books are available to those who cannot afford book stores. Programs for children not only entertain the young ones, but provide assistance to parents.

Those opposing the appropriation for parking in Rockville ask whether it is fair for all taxpayers to subsidize the parking. There are a couple of answers here. First, parking in a structure such as the Rockville garage is necessary when a library is built in an urban environment where there are many attractions, the library being only one. According to Councilman Leventhal's survey, 82.5 percent of those who validate their parking in the garage for library use actually go to the library. By any measure, that figure is more than acceptable.

Even as the library certainly brings people to the Town Center, they may also work out at the gym, have dinner at any of the fine restaurants, or do some shopping at the stores. The library is an anchor, and as such contributes to the overall health of the development. So yes, it is fair for the county to contribute to the parking expense.

Second, one could ask whether it is fair for all taxpayers to subsidize any number of activities from which they receive no direct benefit, but ultimately benefit indirectly. The answer, again, is yes. That is, quite simply, how our government functions.

While we are all painfully aware of the overall economic conditions and of the constraints on the county budget, the approximately \$140,000 the county would spend to cover the parking in Rockville is a worthwhile expense that ultimately contributes to the health and well-being of our area.

Sincerely,

Art Brodsky
Olney, MD
Member, Montgomery County Library Board