



AQUINNAH PUBLIC LIBRARY

**1 Church Street
Aquinnah, MA 02535**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2023-2028**

Approved by the Aquinnah Public Library Board of Trustees, November 29, 2022

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MISSION

The mission of the Aquinnah Public Library is to continually strengthen the fabric of the community by encouraging the interaction of the diverse population of Aquinnah and its visitors, as well as to provide a balanced and professionally developed collection of materials, online and wireless access, and recreational programs. The Aquinnah Public Library, through open, respectful and receptive patron service, strives to: provide for the personal development, education and achievement of all library users; maintain an inviting, safe and neutral atmosphere; provide means through which the community may examine and explore the ideas, images and information of our world; and promote the value of learning, reading and exposing oneself to new, different and challenging ideas.

Mission Statement, 2008

THE TOWN OF AQUINNAH

Aquinnah ([Wampanoag](#): Ahqunahunut) is a [town](#) located on the southwestern end of [Martha's Vineyard](#), in the County of Dukes County, [Massachusetts](#). The town's 40.8 square mile area is known for its colorful cliffs, its regal lighthouse, breathtakingly beautiful beaches, and rural atmosphere. Before the arrival of English colonists, Martha's Vineyard (Wampanoag: Noepe) and Aquinnah were inhabited by the [Wampanoag Nation](#), a Native American people, related to the larger Algonquin Nation of Southern New England.

It is estimated that the earliest sign of human occupation in what is now Aquinnah dates back 10,000 to 7,500 years, and the first English colonists arrived in 1669. Colonists officially divided the town of Aquinnah from Chilmark and incorporated it in 1870 as Gay Head, but in 1998, by popular vote of 79 to 21, the town changed its name to *Aquinnah*, which is Wampanoag for "place at the end of the island." The Wampanoag people gained federal recognition as the [Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head](#) in 1987 and control sovereign tribal lands within the town boundaries.

According to the 2020 census, the town is listed with a population of 439. However, only a percentage of the town's housing stock is occupied year-round; the town population explodes in the summer, when seasonal property owners and thousands of visitors arrive.

THE AQUINNAH PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Aquinnah Public Library is located in a historic Red Schoolhouse building in what is now the center of town. The small one-room schoolhouse was constructed prior to 1844, originally on Old South Road, in what was then the center of town, and was moved to its current location in 1878.

As early as 1857, the Gay Head School was “considered quite up to date with comfortable seats and desks, a full set of Cornell’s large atlases, and well furnished with blackboards.” (Anonymous, 1956:125). By 1889, the school was supported through fees paid by the townspeople rather than the State. The number of teachers increased, as did the length of the school term, and scholarships were offered. From earliest times, the Gay Head School also served as the only indoor public gathering place for townspeople and has always played a central role in the social and emotional fabric of the community.

The Gay Head Public Library (renamed the Aquinnah Public Library in 1998) was established in 1901 by an act of the State Legislature in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. At the time of its establishment, the legislature also appropriated funds for the purchase of a small collection and the schoolhouse became the first and very logical home of the Gay Head Library, sharing space with the school, its students, and teachers. From its inception, the new library found itself competing for space with all the other public needs of the town since the schoolhouse was the only public building in existence until the Town Hall was constructed in 1929. Books purchased with that first entitlement and those bought in later years were later moved across the street to a room next to the stage in the new Town Hall.

By the early 1950’s, the collection had grown to nearly 3,000 books, and was moved back to the small rear “furnace” room of the schoolhouse, which was expanded slightly to accommodate its new use. In 1956 and 1957, however, the school needed the extra room and the library was forced to close while a new home was created for it. In 1958, a crew of volunteers brought the library collection to a cellar area under the west side of Town Hall, which they excavated manually to create a finished room. Damp conditions and flooding next forced removal of the books to a room on the east side of the main hall. After the school closed in the mid-1960’s, the tax collector and town clerk set up office there. It was not until 10 years later that new office space was constructed in the Town Hall for those officials, and the library collection found its way back to the schoolhouse where it remains today.

Except for the addition of modern plumbing, the removal of a bell tower, and a progression of heating systems, the building has remained much as it was originally. It has been recently restored with the assistance of a grant through the Massachusetts Historic Commission and is currently the centerpiece to the historic town center district that is listed in the National Historic Register. A detached outdoor deck area serves seasonally as an additional gathering place for library programs and a quiet space for patrons to use library materials and technology. There have been few changes made to the surrounding grounds other than the addition of a double-sided, hand-carved sign on the front lawn identifying the library and a picnic table area overlooking the adjacent skating pond.

Today, the Aquinnah Public Library is a member of the Cape Libraries Automated Materials Sharing Network (CLAMS), which connects it to 35 libraries and their collections. The network provides access to over 2 million items across the Cape and Islands, online catalog and personal account management, access to state databases, the statewide Commonwealth Catalog system, as well as to Overdrive's digital library service, which includes downloadable e-books, audiobooks, and music. The Friends of the Aquinnah Public Library, composed of both year-round and seasonal residents, play an active role in the library's programming and ongoing development. There are 208 Aquinnah Library cardholders, 110 of them are Aquinnah residents, and the library is visited by approximately 2,500 people annually. The library staff is composed of the Library Director, two Library Associates, and one Library Assistant. The small schoolhouse is still a warm and inviting place for patrons of all ages that provides a responsive, cozy, education center and community hub.



Nancy Aronie discussing her latest book, Memoir as Medicine. July, 2022.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

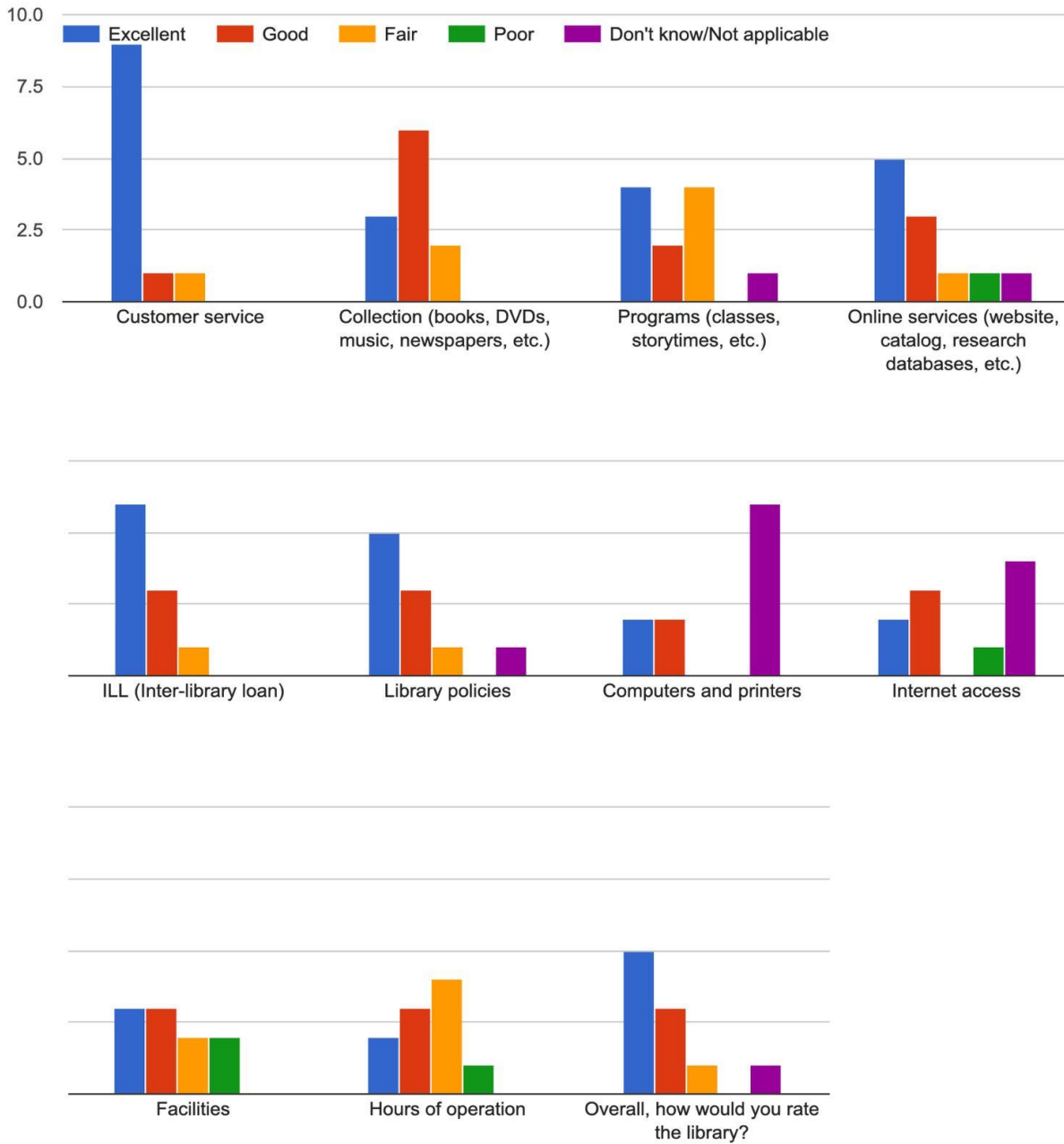
In April of 2022, Massachusetts Library System Strategic Planning Consultant Michelle Eberle facilitated a virtual Community Forum on Zoom. The Forum included visioning/dreams of Aquinnah, a facilitated discussion on the strengths and needs of the library, as well as barriers to usage. Attendees were asked to describe the customer service they received as well as their thoughts on the building, the collection, programs, and technology offered by the library.

Community Forum Common Themes:

- Interest in designated quiet times or a quiet space
- Interest in more opportunities for socializing and connecting
- Explore how to archive/display local history, especially Wampanoag history and fishermen
- Explore creative use of space
- Expand publicity / communications for families and teens through email and social media
- Programs for all ages with arts, culture, food, life skills, local guest speakers, virtual and in-person

Results from Winter/Spring 2022 (February 1 - May 1) online survey:

How would you rate each of the following library services?



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL #1: Programs and Services:

The Aquinnah Public Library encourages the interaction of its diverse community by ensuring that library patrons of all ages have programs and services that meet their recreational and educational needs.

Action Plan:

- Staff will contact community partners to help with development of additional programming for 10-15 year olds, and for school-age children in the community as suggested in the community forums and survey.
 - Data will be kept on classes added to current roster, including attendance, and on potential partnerships sought and/or accomplished.
- Staff will contact community partners to help with development of additional programming for adults as suggested in the community forums and survey.
 - Data will be kept on classes added to current roster, including attendance, and on potential partnerships sought and/or accomplished.
- Partnership with the Wampanoag Tribe, and with the Aquinnah Cultural Center, will be sought regarding history classes, and other mutually agreed programs.
- Staff will increase use of social media and computer programs for advertising of programs to all, and for purposes of availability for those who are homebound.
- A method of providing quiet hours and/or space for quiet study and reading will be sought.

GOAL #2 Technology:

The library has adequate and up-to-date technology for staff usage and patron informational needs.

Action Plan:

- Outdated and non-functional computer equipment will be replaced by year-end.
 - If sufficient resources are not available within our budget, they will be sought from the State, Friends of the Aquinnah Library, and warrant articles through the town meeting

GOAL #3 Collection:

Library patrons have materials with content and in formats that meet their informational and recreational needs.

Action Plan:

- Advertising for Kanopy and other on-line services will be enhanced.
- The Wampanoag Tribal staff will be asked to review the Tribal History Collection, and create a method for noting books that they particularly recommend.

GOAL #4 Facilities:

The library has inviting, safe and neutral space sufficient for its programmatic, administrative and patron usage needs.

Action Plan:

- Storage shed needs replacement or repair.

- o Historic materials need to be moved to a climate controlled area.
- The building is too small for quiet spaces for patrons, and also for staff.
- Investigate possibilities for expansion.
- Investigate possibilities for shading the deck.

GOAL #5 Grounds:

The grounds are utilized to provide safe and sufficient parking and outside programmed activities for library patrons.

Action Plan:

- Continue to pursue safe parking for library patrons.
 - o Investigate signage designating reserved space during library hours for library patron usage.
- Install replacement sign for the front of the building along State Road.

GOAL #6 Staff:

The Aquinnah Public Library has sufficient qualified staff to be responsive to patron needs.

Action Plan:

- Create opportunities for professional development.
- Recruit and advertise vacancies to an expanded audience.

MAKING THE PLAN WORK

The Trustees and staff of the Aquinnah Public Library are dedicated to continuous implementation and evaluation of the Strategic Plan. Review of progress will be reported on by the Library Director at future Board of Trustees meetings. We will continue with the development of recommendations for future Action Plans.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVAL

The Aquinnah Public Library Board of Trustees exists by virtue of Chapter 78, Section 10-13,21 of the General Laws of Massachusetts and exercise the powers and authority, and assume the responsibilities delegated to it under said statute. Trustees are elected by the registered voters of the town of Aquinnah, serving for three year terms. Trustees make general operating and administrative policies and act as an agent of public trust governing the library. The Board is legally responsible for administrative policy making. This Strategic Plan was approved by the Aquinnah Library Board of Trustees on November 29, 2022.

Kathie Olsen, Chair
Margie Spitz, Trustee
Sophia Welch, Trustee and Secretary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan is the result of the heart and dedication of the many members of the community who attended the Strategic Planning Community Forum and who responded to the survey. Special thanks to Roxane Ackerman, Meg Higgins, Amy Macey, Kathie Olsen, Molly Purves, Nancy Slate, Margie Spitz, Heidi Vanderhoop, Louis Vanderhoop, Barbara Wallen, Gary Paraboschi, and Jack Fruchtman for their contributions. The Aquinnah Public Library staff, consisting of Rosa Parker (Library Director), Vera Dello Russo (Library Associate), and Julia Matejcek (Library Associate), were also instrumental and we are grateful to them for their efforts.

We also want to recognize and thank Michelle Eberle, consultant from the Massachusetts Library System, who facilitated the Strategic Planning Community Forum in April 2022 and supported us through the entire process of creating the 2023-2028 Aquinnah Public Library Strategic Plan.



Setsunai performing on the library lawn to a full crowd. August, 2022.