



## \$50K In State Funding Helps Half Hollow Hills Library Expand Solar Energy

State construction aid will support additional solar panels at the Dix Hills branch.

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DIX HILLS, NY — New York State construction funding is helping local libraries invest in long-term sustainability and essential infrastructure, with grants awarded this year to the Half Hollow Hills Community Library and Harborfields Public Library for energy efficiency and building upgrades.

Through the New York State Library Construction Aid Program, the Half Hollow Hills Community Library received \$50,000 to support the installation of additional solar panels at its Dix Hills branch.

Library Director Margie Hartough said the solar panel funding represents a long-term investment that benefits both the library and the broader community.

“The Half Hollow Hills Community Library is thankful to receive a \$50,000 New York State construction grant for the installation of solar panels at the library,” Hartough said. “This grant is an investment in our future. The solar panels will help the library operate more efficiently, reduce long-term costs, and serve our community responsibly for years.”

Hartough said the Dix Hills branch already had solar panels when the new building was constructed, but the library decided to expand that system after seeing how effective it was in reducing operating costs.

“When we built the library, we had solar panels, but they are such an amazing cost savings that we put additional solar panels in,” she said. “We got \$50,000, and that goes a long way in saving money for the community. That’s an ongoing savings every year.”

Hartough said the solar panels were completed and fully operational by the end of November, allowing the library to immediately begin seeing financial and energy benefits.

“They’re up and running, and we are already saving money,” she said. “We’re saving energy and being more sustainable. This library definitely runs on solar. We also have a geo-cooling system. It’s a very sustainable building — a smart building.”

Hartough said construction grants are particularly important because state operating aid for libraries is limited, making capital funding essential for maintaining both new and aging facilities.

“We get very minimal library aid from the state, but the construction grants go a long way to helping keep these buildings running,” she said. “Especially for older buildings — and even newer ones — the construction grants help ensure the full expense doesn’t fall on the community.”

The Library Construction Aid Program also provides broader economic benefits, Hartough said, since construction projects often rely on local contractors and trades.

“All the money that’s put into construction aid here, especially in Suffolk County, goes to local trade,” she said. “When we did the solar panels, we hired a local company. So it’s helpful on many levels.”

Looking ahead, Hartough said the library system is beginning to consider future renovation needs at its Melville branch, which she described as a historic structure.



The Half Hollow Hills Community Library's Melville branch, a historic building that recently marked its 100th year, may be considered for future renovation projects, library officials said. (Kepherd Daniel/Patch)

"That building just passed 100 years old," she said. "It was one of the early schoolhouses in Melville. We don't have specific plans yet, but we're definitely looking toward updating that building in the future."

Other Suffolk County libraries, including those in Northport, Harborfields, and Commack, also received state construction aid this year through the same program.

Assemblyman Steve Stern, whose district includes the Half Hollow Hills and Harborfields libraries, said the funding reflects the state's continued commitment to public libraries as essential neighborhood resources.

"I am proud to announce this important funding for the Half Hollow Hills Community Library and Harborfields Public Library," Stern said in a statement. "Our libraries provide services for young and old alike

and are an integral part of what makes our community a great place to raise our families.”

Hartough said continued legislative support is critical to keeping the construction aid program funded and accessible.

“We’re very grateful to Steve Stern for his help, because you do need legislators that keep this on the agenda and push it through for us,” she said. “The construction aid really helps us spread other money for services while staying within the tax cap.”

Hartough added that while libraries quietly provide education, meeting space, technology, and programming every day, they rely heavily on public awareness and support.

“It really helps all of us,” she said. “The tide lifts all boats.”