



Date of Council Meeting: March 28, 2016

**TOWN OF LEESBURG  
TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

**Information Memo**

**Subject:** 2015 Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission Annual Report

**Staff Contact:** Alexandra S. Gressitt, Library Director

**Council Action Requested:** None.

**Staff Recommendation:** None.

**Commission Recommendation:** Not Applicable.

**Fiscal Impact:** None.

**Work Plan Impact:** Not Applicable.

**Executive Summary:** Section 2.195 of the *Boards and Commission Ordinance* indicates that the Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission is required to produce an annual report to the town council summarizing activities and accomplishments of the commission including publicizing Thomas Balch Library, sponsoring the Annual Loudoun History Awards, and working with Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, Inc., to promote and support programs and collections.

**Background:** The Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission is a seven member body, not less than four members of which are town residents, appointed by town council and consisting of anyone with a stated interest in the Thomas Balch Library. Town Council also appoints a member of the board of supervisors to serve as a member of the Thomas Balch Library Commission whose term shall correspond to the official tenure of office as supervisor.

**Attachments:**

1. 2015 Thomas balch Library Advisory Commission Annual Report

# **Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission Annual Report**

**2015**

The Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission with the full support of the library director maintained monthly oversight of the library's functions, activities, and policies. The commission, also, maintained an active liaison with the Town Council and with The Friends of Thomas Balch Library, a 501(c)(3) group that provides additional support to the library. In addition, as it has in every year since 1993 save one (2000, during the library's renovation), the commission awarded the annual Loudoun History Awards in an 8 November ceremony honoring the winners. The event was well-attended and received media coverage. Matters concerning Balch's future arising from the library's heavy patron use (over 30,000) and growing importance as a research and cultural center for Leesburg occupied much of the commission's attention during the year.

After consideration and discussion, the commission concluded that Balch's greatest need for the future (both near and long term) was expansion. Balch's success in attracting valuable archival collections has stretched its archival storage space to capacity. Additionally, the growing collection of books used as references and collections of genealogical material are beginning to exceed shelf capacity. The library's meeting room, which is frequently used for presentations, book talks, and films, has a limited seating capacity (below 80 persons) that has proved insufficient on several occasions. In the commission's view, the best solution would be acquisition of the property on the library's west side as the site for an additional library building. Acquiring that property would bring several advantages to the library and the town such as additional parking and construction of a building that could contain a larger meeting room to serve the library and other town functions.

In the past year, the commission monitored and participated in the organization of the Thomas Balch Library Endowment Foundation. The foundation's mission is to provide resources to enhance the library's future value to its patrons and to the Town of Leesburg. The commission is pleased with the progress made in the foundation's organization.

Respectfully Submitted,

James H. Hershman, Jr.

Chairman, Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission