**PETITIONS by Judy Hills, FONCPL President
April 28, 2022**

The New Bern-Craven County Public Library (the city’s only public library) is tucked up in the middle of the historic district and is in the flood plain. When Hurricane Florence flooded parts of New Bern in 2018, the area where the library was located was closed off for quite a while and the library had to close—at a time when residents most needed its computer services for researching help. As a result of the flooding, the library floors need to be replaced and the plan was “floated” to move the entire library for a period of time (probably months) while the floors were fixed.

This got the trustees to thinking about the whole issue of space—something they had been discussing prior to that hurricane. At a trustee meeting in April 2022, one trustee who is a county commissioner, said, “We need a petition—right now.” I happened to be there that night to give a report for the Friends, so naturally, I volunteered for the Friends to spearhead the effort since one of our primary roles is advocating for the needs of the library. This is what got the ball rolling.

This is the first time that I have ever designed a petition campaign and drafted a petition, so I began with doing online research. First, I had to gather some data on the history of the library and the population of the greater New Bern area—the service area of the library. Next, I researched how to write an effective needs statement. I found an interesting formula: PAS: Pain, Agitate, Solve. It begins with laying out the problem. Then I drafted an Open Letter to the Community, a hard copy petition, an online petition (free), and a press release. We are currently working on the marketing plan.

Here are a couple of tips & resources:

* The more information you try to collect from people, the less inclined they will be to either sign the petition or fill it out completely. Also, people don’t like to give out their personal info for fear they will be bombarded with requests/information. We just captured names and zip codes so commissioners will know that the signers live in the library’s service area.
* The only petition I was able to customize so it did not collect the email address was on [petitions.net](https://www.petitions.net/).
* [Everylibrary.org](https://action.everylibrary.org/launchpetition) will help you with a petition.
* Remember that your library’s service area is generally larger than just the municipal boundaries.
* Per Lynda Reynolds: The State Library just updated Public Library Standards document.  It is viewable here: <https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/services-libraries/resources-library-staff/public-library-standards>  There is a standard under Facilities Size that has a table for recommended square foot per capita: <https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/services-libraries/resources-library-staff/public-library-standards/facilities#size>
* [Click here](https://friendsofthenewbern-craven.app.box.com/s/a2wp8w94itb89dlo71wmnbii7xyg6zja) for a copy of our hard copy petition.
* [Click here](https://friendsofthenewbern-craven.app.box.com/s/5rnoq4amotagpel0b9gbsxpaqhj35y75) to view the Open Letter.
* [Click here](https://www.petitions.net/new_bern_library_petition) for our online petition.
* [Problem Agitation Solution model.](https://copywritematters.com/paso-copywriting-formula/)

So, I hope this helps you if you are ready to advocate for your library!