

September 14, 2010

## **Belleville Area District Library [BADL] November Ballot Proposal**

Prior to April 17<sup>th</sup> of this year, our local library was under the jurisdiction of the Wayne County Library System. As a member of that system, the Fred C. Fischer Library was subject to decisions that were made by that entity. Many times, the decisions and directions from the county library system were not in the best interests of “our” library. Recognizing the need for local control, a committee of elected officials from Belleville, Sumpter, and Van Buren worked tirelessly for over a year to hammer out an agreement that allowed the Belleville Area District Library to become a reality.

Getting out from under the Wayne County Library System has cut over \$70,000 in administrative fees and over \$85,000 in benefit costs from the current budget of the Belleville Area District Library [BADL]. Even with these savings, the Library is not immune from the budget shortfalls that have been sweeping communities across the state. Due to tough economic times, library usage has increased dramatically even as funding sources to operate the library have decreased. Overall, library usage is up by more than 25% since 2008-09, while basic operating expenses continue to rise. During the same period of time, revenue sources have dropped at least 14%.

Since 2008-09, we have used fund balance (savings) to cover operating expenses to prevent cuts in services. During this time, our library’s funding sources have declined by about \$125,000 (including more than \$60,000 from penal/motor vehicle fines and from state aid). Since Belleville and Van Buren Township use General Fund money to support the library, any further cuts in their budgets will impact the library even more.

This decrease in revenue has and will continue to impact library services. One of many examples is the library’s computer budget, which has been cut in half, with only \$5,000 available to update hardware and software on 35 computers.

Each of the three communities selected representatives who became members of the new District Library Board. Per the parameters outlined in the agreement that was signed by all three communities, the BADL board is charged with securing a millage of at least .7 mil in order for the District Library to continue. At this time, Sumpter Township levies a .7 library millage. Van Buren Township and the City of Belleville pay their share from their general funds. Passage of a .7 library operating millage by the communities within the Belleville Area District Library will stabilize current library operations.

The District Library agreement also charges the District Library Board with developing a plan that addresses the library’s future needs. This plan will encompass the site selection, design, building, and operation of a new library building and satellite, ensuring that the services and library collections are adequate and accessible to all the residents served by the Belleville Area District Library. We will begin this process in earnest once we have secured the required operating millage of .7 mil.

Mary Jane Dawson, Chair  
Belleville Area District Library Board