

Belleville Area District Library (Formerly Fred C. Fischer Library) Millage Proposal Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Does the Fred C. Fischer Library still exist and what is BADL?

Recognizing the need for local control, a committee of elected officials from the Tri-Community (Belleville, Sumpter, and Van Buren) worked tirelessly for over a year to construct the *District Library Agreement* that allowed the Belleville Area District Library (BADL) to become a reality. This committee had the foresight to include many provisions that, if completed, would ensure that our community would have a first class library as we started the 21st century. That agreement included establishing the former Fred C. Fischer Library as the Belleville Area District Library (BADL) with the creation of a seven person board, a directive to find a location to build a new library, and a requirement that BADL stabilize funding with a 0.7 millage that would be levied every year from the Tri-Community. The new district library board has two years to complete these goals or the district library will cease to exist.

The Fred C. Fischer Library was part of the Wayne County Library System. For many years this arrangement allowed the library to offer more services and benefits than it could alone. As of April 17th, the library broke away from the Wayne County Library System to establish its own identity as the Belleville Area District Library. Since then there have been many changes to how the library is operated and soon the public will get a chance to change how it is funded. The following FAQs will help clarify where the library has been, where it is now, and why a millage is necessary to keep the library open and offering the services on which the community has come to depend.

Q: If there were Benefits to being a part of Wayne County Library System, why did the library leave to become BADL?

A: As a member of the Wayne County Library System, the Fischer library was subjected 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 and the community. These decisions negated any benefits gained by being part of that system.

Q: Why is being a district library better?

Being a district library gives complete control over the funds and operation to the community and saves money that can be used on more resources. The Tri-Community officials appointed a seven member board to oversee the establishment of BADL and make sure the details of the agreement are adhered to. The community also has the control of electing board members by voting in November 2010. Already in the few short months that BADL has been in existence, the library has realized a savings of \$70,000 in administrative fees and over \$85,000 in benefit costs from the current library budget.

Q: How was the Fred C. Fischer Library funded?

A: The library was funded by Sumpter Township with a 0.7 mil tax collected annually from the Sumpter residents. The City of Belleville and Van Buren Township contributed monies from their general funds. This funding was given to the Fred C. Fischer Library as an operating budget.

Q: Great, we have a board guiding the direction of the library, we are saving money, the community has control, and it is funded. Everything is in place and we can continue to enjoy the services of the library, right?

A: Not exactly. Even with the savings mentioned above, the Library is not immune from the budget shortfalls that have been sweeping communities across the state. Since 2008-09, our library's funding sources have declined by \$125,000.00 (including more than \$60,000 from penal/motor vehicle fine 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.

Due to tough economic times, library usage has increased dramatically (up more than 25% since 2008-09) even as funding sources to operate the library have decreased by 14% during the same period of time.

Q. What happens to the tax money that has been going to the library and why is the library asking for a millage?

A. The *District Library Agreement* requires the library to pursue an operational millage of 0.7 mil (separate from the municipal general funds) by 2012 or the district library will cease to exist. The *District Library Agreement* would be dissolved at that time making the existence of any library in our community uncertain.

Sumpter is the only municipality that currently levies 0.7 mils specifically for the library. Because of the current economic environment, The City of Belleville and Van Buren Township will have to make tough choices about how they allocate their general fund money and that may not include support for BADL. We are seeking 0.7 mils to be collected in all of the tri-community areas that will be specifically used for BADL operations, thus stabilizing a BADL budget for the foreseeable future.

It is important to note the following:

- In Sumpter this 0.7 mils would replace the current 0.7 mils approved in 2008 by the voters. There would be no tax increase should this proposal pass.

- In Van Buren Township, taxpayers will experience a 5.558 mil reduction in their taxes as the water bond millage expired this year. If the library 0.7 mil passes there will still be a 4.858 mils net reduction on the winter tax bill.

Q: What would the cost to homeowners be should the millage pass?

A: If a 0.7 millage passes, that means that a homeowner would be taxed 0.70 cents for every \$1,000 of taxable value on the home. For instance, if the taxable value on a home is \$100,000.00, the tax levied would be \$70 per year. That would be roughly \$25 per person per year.

Q: How much do other communities pay for library service?

A: Per person, the state average local library operating income was \$40.77. Average for Class V libraries (serving populations from 26,000 to 49,999) is \$41.46. Nearby communities' library income ranged from \$25.90 to \$94.31 per person per year. The 0.7 mil will provide the Belleville Area District Library (service population 40,000) with \$25.29 per capita. See table below:

Community	Operating Millage Rate	Cost Per Person
Canton	1.498	\$77.41
Chelsea	1.6382	\$94.31
Saline	1.183	\$62.83
Wayne	0.9999	\$40.61
Westland	0.9477	\$25.90
Ypsilanti	1.5074	\$47.30
Belleville Area District Library	0.7	Approx. \$25.00 if 0.7 mils approved

Q. What happens if the district library millage doesn't pass?

A. Belleville and Van Buren will cut their contributions to the library further and Sumpter's will also drop because of the old formula based budget, even though the voters approved the previous 0.7 mil. Beginning in January 2011, the library will have less revenue to provide services than it had in 2003 before we added morning hours. This cut, along with losses in state aid and county penal fines will result in staff cuts at all levels and the library closing mornings or Fridays. It will also result in a 25% to 30% cut in purchasing of books and other materials. It may result in fewer public Internet stations as old machines break and cannot be replaced. By 2013 it could mean completely closing the library.

Q. How does the community benefit from the library?

A. A large variety of books and materials for children, teens, and adults are available. The library has computers with free Internet access and word processing software. Year-round children's programs are heavily attended. Librarians are available to answer reference questions. The library provides information and materials for entertainment, enlightenment, and lifelong enrichment.

In these difficult economic times the Library acts as a safety net for many residents, providing free public broadband internet, assistance with job searches, resume submissions, cover letter and resume building, unemployment registration and claims, email creation, and on-line job applications. Your neighbors use library computers with assistance from the library staff to access state, county, and federal services from filing FAFSA college financial aid forms to filing their state and federal income tax returns. School children without broadband or a computer at home rely on the library for completing required assignments.

Libraries remain an important community asset.

Q. How can I get my money's worth from this tax?

A. Sign out one hardcover book, average price of a book = \$28.00, or three paperbacks, or two DVD movies, or download one audio book. For those without broadband Internet access, the \$25 per person annual cost is equal to one month of access from Comcast or AT&T. Netflix membership costs \$8.99 per month.

Q. You mentioned that one of the stipulations in the *District Library Agreement* is to find a site for a new library. When are we getting a new building and will any of the 0.7 mils go toward the construction of a new library?

A: Yes, there is a requirement that the library board must create a plan to find a suitable site and build a new library. However, the 0.7 mils is only an operating budget to keep the library going, none of the 0.7 mils will go to funding a new building. A second millage specifically for building construction must be passed in the future.

Q: Is there a site selected yet?

A: After we establish a stable operating budget, the library board will seek community input on a new building. The library Board is currently researching alternative sites for a new library. Before a site is selected, the Board intends to hold focus group meetings throughout the District to gather community opinion so that a new site will meet the needs of most users.

Ballot Language:

Library Millage Proposal

Approval of this millage will allow the District Library to levy mills to replace contributions previously made from the participating municipalities of the City of Belleville, Charter Township of Van Buren, and Township of Sumpter for library operating purposes.

Shall taxes be imposed on taxable property in the Belleville Area District Library, County of Wayne, Michigan, in an amount not to exceed \$0.70 per thousand dollars (0.7 mills) of the taxable value, for 12 years beginning in the year 2010 to the year 2021 inclusive, as new additional millage to provide funds for library operating purposes? It is estimated that 0.7 mills would raise approximately \$1,020,153 when first levied with the December 1, 2010 levy.