

More Library Millage Concerns

Letter to the Editor: Save Our Library!

Why the November Vote Matters to Fruitport!

Kate Holtrop



In 2015, Fruitport residents hit the polls to show the MADL we meant business when it came to providing funds to our library. Our voters approved the separation of the Fruitport Library from the MADL in order to establish a library of our own. The Fruitport Library began the process of becoming its own library district.

In May of 2016, our library got approval for a “new,” “additional” millage of .75 (\$0.75 on each \$1000 taxable value) for operating costs for 3 years beginning in December of 2016 and ending in December of 2018. THIS CURRENT MILLAGE WILL EXPIRE THIS DECEMBER.

On our November ballot, we will see the millage for the Fruitport District Library, which is the first time the Fruitport Library will be on the ballot as the Fruitport DISTRICT Library. The millage that voters are being asked to approve this year is NOT AN ADDITIONAL MILLAGE. It is actually a RENEWAL of the original amount of .75 mills. The words “new” and “additional” are legally necessary to have on the ballot because of the name change and because of a legal technicality based in our library’s previous request for a millage in May of 2016, but there is NO ADDITIONAL FUNDING being taken from our taxes, only the original .75 mills.

IF WE DON’T VOTE TO FUND OUR LIBRARY, WE MIGHT SEE OUR LIBRARY CLOSE. We as voters, library staff and volunteers, board members, and all residents of Fruitport, did not work so hard to fund our library just to see it collapse after only 3 years, did we?

If the Fruitport District Library closes, residents who are members of the Fruitport Library won’t have access to library services until they join another library outside Fruitport. Local residents who join other districts may be charged a non-resident fee by their new libraries for their new library cards. Some libraries do not have non-resident programs at all. But if we vote to continue funding our library here in Fruitport, the Fruitport District Library can remain funded and continue providing free and inexpensive library services to Fruitporters for the next 10 years, that’s 2019-2028!

Our library’s board members are not being paid for their hard work. The “Friends of the Fruitport Library” contributed over \$400, personally, for a postcard campaign that provided information on the millage for the August 7th Primary vote. However, because enough people weren’t reached with the RENEWAL news, August voters didn’t realize the importance of their “Yes” vote. Voters may have believed their property taxes would be raised to a point even higher than the amount necessary to support the 1.25 mills the MADL was requiring for its funding. Then, this thinking would have been a huge mistake. Now, thinking like this will be disastrous, since we may not get another chance to vote on this millage for a long time. THE .75 MILLS OUR LIBRARY IS ASKING FOR WILL NOT INCREASE OUR PROPERTY TAX AT ALL. As a result of the misunderstanding between our Fruitport District Library and the general public of Fruitport, our library proposal was voted down in August and lost by 90 votes. 90 votes between 4 precincts! Our library, the jobs of the good people who run it, and the many services and programs it provides, will hang on our decision to vote for the renewal of funding for the library we worked so hard to create.

Our Fruitport District Library millage will pay to keep our librarians at work, to keep the lights on, and pay for services the library provides for us like:

- this year’s Summer Reading Program
- the 1,567 library cards it has issued as of June of 2018
- the Hoopla Program
- inexpensive access to printing and faxing
- free access to public computers and Wi-Fi
- access to more than 26,000 individual items in-house
- access to library books from libraries all over Michigan
- ability to use your Fruitport library card at any West Michigan library
- access to E-books through the Overdrive Program
- music, movies, and more through Hoopla
- SCOLA for different language learning and information
- MeLCat- Michigan eLibrary Catalog
- certified, hardworking, and courteous staff
- weekly children’s programming

Public information about the FDL vote in the November 6th Midterm election is available on the Fruitport District Library website under the heading “November 2018 Millage,” here in our Fruitport Area News, and especially at our very

own Fruitport District Library. Information is also available on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, October 17th, at 5:30pm, when the library board meeting is held at the Township Hall. An open discussion on the millage will be held that will then lead into the board meeting itself.

The library will also be holding a book sale on the week leading up to the election, November 1st-6th, where information about the millage will be available and staff will be able to answer questions you may still have. Public information can be distributed by citizens of Fruitport, and by our library. But only citizens who do not work for the library can encourage others to vote “Yes”. Information can be distributed at the polls 100 feet or farther from the polling place. Watch your ballot carefully: the library’s vote is listed last of all on our ballots and, in some cases, on the back of the ballot form.

We have to vote “Yes” for our library’s millage on November 6th if we want to see our library survive for the next decade’s worth of Fruitport residents and their children. We worked hard to get our library, and we have to put in the voting power to keep it!

Fruitport District Library Q & A - Why Do We Need a Library Millage?

Fruitport District Library

47 Park Street

Fruitport, MI 49415

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Q. Will approving this library millage increase my taxes?

A. No, Fruitport residents have been paying .75 mills for library services since 2006. The current millage began December 2016 and expires December 2018. The November 2018 millage proposal will ask for the same .75 mills (not new – not additional) from 2019-2028.

Q. What is the library millage for?

A. The millage will pay for the general operation of the Fruitport District Library, including materials, technology, staff, programs, and building and grounds maintenance. Also, more digital projects and literacy programs for adults and children. We have budgeted for a savings capital project for handicap accessibility.

History:

Fruitport Township residents were with the Muskegon Areas District Library from 2006-2016. We paid .75 mills annually for library operations. In 2015 we voted to separate from the MADL and begin establishing our own library. In May 2016 we voted to approve a “new” “additional” millage of .75 for the operation of the Fruitport library for three years beginning December 2016 through December 2018. On December 31, 2016 the agreement with the MADL ended and we began establishing a Fruitport Library. In January, February and March of 2017 we contracted with Spring Lake Library so our residents would continue to receive full services until the Fruitport Library was ready for operation. In April 2017 Fruitport Library opened with the funds from the .75 millage collected from winter taxes. We were able to purchase 13,600 books two years and newer as required in order to be a member of Lakeland Library.

Q. The library proposal says it’s a “new” “additional” millage? Can you explain this?

A. The ballot language is what the library attorney and the Library of Michigan legal counsel says we are required to have. The Library Board wanted to simply say library renewal, as we believe it is, but the library attorney states that in order to be legal, the language must say “new” and “additional”. It may be because of the separation from MADL.

Q. What happens to the library now that the millage failed?

A. Fruitport District Library Board has decided to put the proposal on the November 6, 2018 ballot for the residents to consider again. If it fails, there will be no funds for library operation and we will have to close it down.

Q. The current library .75 millage is for how long?

A. The current millage of .75 was a three year millage 2016 -2018 and expires this year. The “new” millage will be from 2019-2028 at the same .75 mills that we have always paid.

Q. What would we be paying for library services if we were still with the MADL?

A. The current MADL millage is 1.25 mills for ten (10) years.

Q. What good is the library?

A. We have issued 1567 library cards as of June 2018. In the summer of 2018 we scheduled 8 events during the Summer Reading Program.

Q. What services does the library provide?

A. The Board of Directors just approved the Hoopla Program.

*Inexpensive printing and faxing services

*Free access to public computers and Wi-Fi

*Access to over 26,000 individual items in-house

*Access to library books from libraries across the state of Michigan, including Spring Lake District Library and other Lakeland Library Cooperative libraries

*Ability to use your library card at any library in West Michigan

*Access to electronic books through the Overdrive Program

*Music & Movies with additional information through Hoopla (coming soon)

*SCOLA for different language learning and information

*Mel Cat

*Certified Library Director, Certified Children’s Librarian and Administrative Assistant Staff who provide courteous customer service

*Weekly children’s programming

Q. How much does the Library Board of Directors get paid?

A. In the past only the secretary and treasurer received compensation of \$45/per monthly meeting. Since the formation of the Fruitport District Library, January 2017, no one on the Board has received compensation for their service.