

## R.C. Library to seek shorter term millage

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The Reed City Area District Library Board reacted to the message voters sent in August by modifying ballot language for another go-around in November.

Voters will be asked Nov. 4 to pass a library operating millage for a period of ten years for an amount not to exceed 0.95 mills. Approval would permanently sanction a district library system.



A shorter timeframe replaces wording in the August proposal that would have imposed an operating levy in perpetuity if it had passed.

“Voter feedback was that the term of ‘perpetuity’ may have been a significant factor,” said library director Heather Symon.

Voters turned down the operating millage 496 no to 396 yes.

The measure passed in the city of Reed City 167 to 150 but failed by a slim margin in Richmond Township 167 no to 153 yes. It failed by a landslide in Lincoln Township 176 no to 82 yes.



District library board members voted Aug. 11 to limit the time period to 10 years In November. Voters will have subsequent millage renewals to decide.

Besides providing stable, long-term funding, the fate of a district library as an independent entity rests on a successful operating millage.

Symon explained an agreement approved by the city and the two townships created a district library as of April 1, 2014.

However, the agreement requires a voter-approved operating millage of at least 0.95 mills by Nov. 30, 2015 to designate the district library a permanent entity with core funding.

The millage proposal for providing library services is the first-ever put before voters.

Historically, the library functioned as a city library partially financed by city government with a majority of revenue derived from district court penal fines.

But libraries across the state have received dwindling amounts of revenue from penal fines due to the state taking a bigger slice, lower percentage of collections and fewer tickets being written.

Hence, the move toward a district library became a financial solution.

Symon acknowledged penal fine revenue has consistently dropped by \$30,000 over time.

An overriding factor attached to a second defeated millage proposal in August has to do with library location.

Although the library's 20-year agreement for leasing space inside the County Annex Building has expired, the county Board of Commissioners has granted two extensions.

The library will evacuate the premises June 2016 unless a third extension is given.

This week county commissioners at a regular meeting directed the building committee to review requests from departments interested in taking over the current library space.

Voters in August also defeated a bonding proposal for renovating, furnishing and equipping the former St. Philip School building at 829 South Chestnut Street. The library purchased the building in 2010 as a future home.

Symon explained the renovation bond proposal can only be on the ballot once in a calendar year. It will be up to the district library board to place the measure on a 2015 ballot.

USDA Rural Development had guaranteed a construction loan for \$700,000, an equipment loan of \$258,000 and an equipment grant of \$75,000.

Symon said the library could lose a significant portion of the equipment loan-grant package if not all.

"The \$700,000 construction loan is still an option but we may have to alter the requested amount," Symon added.

Meanwhile, the district library continues fund raising and submitting grant applications. Details about the library project and special fundraising events are given on the website

[www.reedcitylibrary.org/](http://www.reedcitylibrary.org/).