

PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

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Library Board Votes to Put Referendum on Ballot

The Palatine Public Library District Board of Trustees has voted to place a referendum on the ballot on April 2, 2019. This referendum asks voters to approve a “limiting rate increase” on the Library’s property tax levy of 0.075. This amount will provide for all of the Library’s financial needs through 2035. The Library’s limiting rate would go from 0.276 in 2017 to 0.351 in 2019.

“Currently, the Library receives \$6.8 million in annual revenue. Each year, it gets more difficult to meet expenses with that amount,” says Board Treasurer Hal Snyder. “By 2024, the amount needed to operate our three locations at present levels of service and maintain the facilities will substantially exceed revenue and reserves on hand.”

The main building is 25 years old and the facility systems are aging past their life expectancy. Capital projects needed at the main library include a significant portion of roof replacement, HVAC system updates, and energy-efficient lighting. Library Executive Director Jeannie Dilger said the building has issues at times with providing appropriate heat and air conditioning. Recently, tarps needed to be placed over book stacks to protect the collections from roof leaks.

To address the facility issues, the Library needs over \$5.8 million in the next six years. Although the Library has nearly \$1 million in capital reserves, this amount would not cover all the costs and keep the doors open at the same time.

“The Library became a district in 1974, and in the 44 years since then, the Library has never asked the community for an operating rate increase,” said Dilger. “The Library Board and management have done a really good job finding efficiencies and operating with a lean staff to keep costs low for taxpayers.” The Library did go out for a capital bond referendum in 1991 to build the main branch, which was supported by voters and constructed in 1992. Those bonds were paid off in 2011.

“After the bonds were paid library property taxes went down. Since then, we have been planning for the future and looking at all of the systems inside the main branch, which is now over 25 years old,” said Board President Bruce Jefferson. This planning included an engineering study of the main library facility, to determine capital replacement needs and costs through 2035, and a financial plan, to examine revenue sources compared to projected expenses.

As costs of books, materials, utilities, and insurance continue to rise, financial planners project that expenses will begin to exceed revenues in 2024. A limiting rate increase now will solve both capital and operating needs.

Library Trustees and staff have spent the past year listening to the public and getting feedback about a potential referendum. The Library has held focus groups, stakeholder meetings, and over 80 individual conversations with residents. Responses from the public were largely constructive and aided Trustees in their decision, at the December 12 board meeting, to place a limiting rate increase referendum on the ballot. Residents with a median home value of \$266,000 would likely see an increase of approximately \$52 in their property taxes.

If the referendum passes, the Library will be able to offer more new books, movies, music, downloadable content, games, resources, and longer open hours. More creation of collaborative spaces and study rooms would accommodate students, entrepreneurs, and groups. More would be invested in new technology and bandwidth to keep up with advances in technology. Collaboration and partnerships with schools, businesses, and local organizations would increase and result in more meaningful resources for partners and our diverse community. The Library will be more prepared to maintain facilities and remain good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

“If the referendum fails,” says Dilger, “the Library will be forced to cut services in order to address the \$5.8 million in capital improvements to repair the aging roof, inefficient lighting, and failing HVAC systems.” At the Main Library and Branches, hours of service would need to be reduced. The budget for the purchase of new materials would shrink, resulting in longer wait times for materials. Technology would be limited to the status quo, thereby failing to meet the demands of growing technology. Vital partnerships and outreach programs would decrease and have a negative impact on school students and underserved populations.

The Library will host community forums in January, February, and March to share information and receive further input from the community on the upcoming referendum. For full details about the Library referendum and community forum dates, visit www.palatinelibrary.org/more.

The vision of Palatine Public Library District is to inspire connection, curiosity, and joy. The Library serves approximately 90,000 residents predominantly within the communities of Palatine and Hoffman Estates.