



Geauga County
Public Library

Press Release

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GCPL approaching voters with bond issue on Nov. 2017 ballot

Geauga County – April 5, 2017 – Geauga County Public Library Board members unanimously passed a motion at the March 21, 2017 meeting to place a half-mill bond issue on the ballot in November. The goal is to improve the county's aging buildings, offering expanded community spaces, an enhanced collection, and technology resources for all citizens. This tax would cost approximately \$17 annually for a homeowner of a \$100,000 house. Library board members and administration staff took their initiative to the County Commissioners March 28.

"We have been touring and reviewing all our branches and stations over the past six months," says Director Ed Worso. "It became obvious that all our locations need attention, with Bainbridge and Thompson having the most significant issues. We want to continue providing excellent service and a top-notch collection to our patrons, and this bond issue will allow us to address the shortcomings that hinder us from providing the best service to the citizens of Geauga County."

We will replace, expand or improve buildings to offer communities comfortable spaces with access to technology and a robust collection for education, information and entertainment purposes. GCPL has delayed making sweeping capital improvements as long as prudently responsible, but the Bainbridge and Thompson locations in particular are in need of immediate attention.



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Bainbridge: The cramped conditions and limited collection in Bainbridge hinders its use. The Bainbridge facility was built in 1985 at a time when interest rates were more than 20 percent. Because funds were low, we built the best we could afford at that time, which we knew was to be temporary. The result was a 10,000-square-foot building that was not built to commercial-grade construction standards like Middlefield or Geauga West. Expensive to maintain and repair, Bainbridge now costs 73 percent more per square foot to heat than Geauga West - at 38 and 22 cents, respectively. And, it needs new lighting, insulation and carpeting. These three items alone could cost \$250,000. Its one community room is frequently booked, and we often cannot accommodate all who express interest in using the room. There are no private study spaces for tutoring. The current building is at the end of its useful life expectancy.

Thompson: The Thompson Library Station is in a challenging situation with the Ledgemont School District whose future is uncertain as it faces a possible consolidation with Cardinal. This event is beyond the library's control. Regardless of how the schools evolve, citizens still need meeting spaces and access to materials, preferably on a full-time basis.

The other locations in Chardon, Chesterland (Gauga West Branch), Middlefield, and Newbury also need work.

Chardon: Community meeting space is limited, and its parking lot needs repaved.

Gauga West: Windows and lights need replaced, and the children's area and open seating need to be expanded.

Middlefield: Carpeting and lighting need to be replaced. Parking for both cars and buggies needs expanding.

Newbury: Similar to the situation in Thompson, we do not have control over a potential school consolidation. We would like to offer expanded hours in our location.

Timing considerations

It will never be cheaper to borrow money than it is right now. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, interest rates are the lowest they've been since the 1950s. Waiting will only increase the chances for rates to rise. Plus, construction and material costs increase every year. If we wait, the overall price will be higher, requiring a higher mill rate.

If the bond issue passes, the Board plans to move forward quickly. We are legally required to spend 85 percent of the bond proceeds on the proposed improvements in three years. We have been working with an architect on preliminary drawings and studying what other leading library systems in the country with similar populations have been doing.



Capital improvements vs. operating expenses

We assure voters that current operating funds are sufficient to run the new and improved facilities we are planning for the foreseeable future. The Trustees and Library Management have worked hard to provide services as efficiently as possible. The bond issue is strictly for improving and expanding our physical spaces.

County-wide approach

Because we are a county-wide library district with needs at all our facilities, the entire county will benefit from the improvements we are planning. We are an excellent library system. When we invest in any of our Branches, we elevate the standards of the entire county. All Geauga's citizens need public spaces where they can meet, learn and grow. We intend to provide high-quality buildings that enable all Geauga residents access to information and materials.

We are in a position to remedy significant space and structural issues in our buildings. With our existing state and local revenue stream, we could fund improving and even replacing some facilities while maintaining operating costs. However, without the support of the community by way of a bond issue, these projects will take significantly longer and not be up to our high standards.

About the Geauga County Public Library

The Geauga County Public Library includes four full-service branches in Bainbridge, Chardon, Chesterland (Geauga West) and Middlefield; two library stations housed in schools in Newbury and Thompson; two Bookmobiles that serve rural areas and community centers; a Lobby Stop vehicle; a car for homebound patrons; and an administrative center where technical services, computer services, facilities and administrative functions reside. GCPL has more than 750,000 books and ebooks. The collection also contains more than 100,000 audio / video items and 400 research databases available through its website. Beginning Feb. 6, 2017, GCPL is a member of the Clevnet consortium, giving patrons access to more than 12 million items. Learn more about the Geauga County Public Library at the GCPL website, GeaugaLibrary.net.