**Mason City Public Library District on the spring 2017 Ballot - Part 1 of 3**

On April 4th, those voters in the Illini Central School District going to the polls will see a question on the ballot about library service. The question is:

Shall the Mason City Public Library District annex certain territories in the Illini Central School District without current tax-supported library services.

What does this mean?

Both the majority of voters living in the library district and the majority of voters outside the library district must agree to the annexation before the annexation can take place. If the majority of either group says no, then the annexation will not happen.

**For those currently living in the library district:**

Simply put, you are being asked if you would like the rest of the school district to join the library district if they as voters decide they would like to join. This vote for you is not about paying more tax dollars to the library. There is **no change** from what you currently pay.

**For those not living in the library district but being asked to join:**

You are being asked if you would like to be a part of the library district. In voting yes, you are saying you want to join the library district and receive library service. Is there a cost for this library service? Yes, and it appears on your property tax bill. Currently the library tax rate is 23 cents per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation so the table below gives a sample of home values and the impact the referendum would have to a property owner’s tax bill.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Home’s Fair Market Value1** | **Home Assessed –Value (EAV)2** | **Estimated Yearly Tax Impact3** |
| $ 50,000\* | 16,666.67 | $ 38.33 ($24.53 with homestead exemption) |
| **$ 60,000\*** | **20,000.00** | **$ 46.00 ($32.20 with homestead exemption)** |
| $ 75,000\* | 25,000.00 | $ 57.50 ($43.70 with homestead exemption) |
| $100,000 | 33,333.33 | $ 76.67 ($62.87 with homestead exemption) |
| $125,000 | 41,666.67 | $ 95.83 ($82.03 with homestead exemption) |

**The average property value of $60,878 in Mason County’s Allen’s Grove Township and $58,615 in Sherman Township was obtained from the Mason County Assessor’s Office.**

Why is the library putting this question on the ballot?

Over the years since the library was built next to the school, residents of the school district both in the served and the unserved library area have wondered why the entire school district does not receive public library service. After much discussion, the library board agreed to put the question on the ballot for the voters to decide if they would like to receive library services.

Next week’s article will talk about what the library offers to the residents it serves, how the figures on the table above were arrived and are there other reasons for this referendum being on the ballot other than to give library service to this area.

**Mason City Public Library District on the spring 2017 Ballot - Part 2 of 3**

**For those without library service, what does the library offer access to?**

1. 24,000+ items in the building itself including books, audiobooks, DVD’s and reference materials such as atlases, dictionaries, encyclopedias and almanacs.
2. 3 million+ items online from SHARE which the library belongs to
3. 10 online databases available 24/7
4. 2 databases of e-books and e-audiobooks 24/7. Each has over 10,000 books for all ages including best seller books.
5. 100+ magazines online 24/7 with no due date. Keep them as long as you like!
6. A meeting room that organizations or groups can utilize
7. All library programs and events
8. Summer reading program (available to children birth though high school) with prizes along the way to help prevent the reading backslide during summer months
9. Ability to use your library card at other libraries at no additional cost

**Are there other reasons why the referendum has been placed on the ballot?**

No. The library does not owe money for its building nor is it trying to raise funds to cover the services it provides. In these economic conditions, the library cannot provide services to anyone that is not a resident and many of our programs are being attended by those outside the district especially the children’s programs so the library is offering the opportunity for all in the school district. This question is strictly on the ballot to ask those in the Illini Central School District without library service if library service is something you as a voter would like to see.

**How do you calculate the tax to be paid?**

First you take the fair market value of your home/property and divide it by three to arrive at your EAV(equalized assessed valuation) or you can find your EAV on your tax document. You then can deduct $6,000 if you live in the home and take no deduction if you do not. Then take that amount and divide it by 100 and then multiply that number by .23 to arrive at the tax amount.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Fair Market Value** | **$100,000** |
| Divided by one-third to arrive at EAV | **$33,333.33** |
| No exemptions applied | **-0-** |
| **Net Taxable Value** | **$33,333.33** |
| Divide by 100 | **$333.33** |
| **Multiply by increase of 23 cents** | **$76.67 – this is the tax impact on a home with a FAIR MARKET VALUE OF $100,000** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Fair Market Value** | **$100,000** |
| Divided by one-third to arrive at EAV | **$33,333.33** |
| Less Homeowners Exemption | **-$6,000** |
| **Net Taxable Value** | **$27,333.33** |
| Divide by 100 | **$273.33** |
| **Multiply by increase of 23 cents** | **$62.87 - this is the tax impact on a home with a FAIR MARKET VALUE of $100,000 and a Homestead Exemption of $6,000** |

**With the amount of money you collect from Sherman or Allen’s Grove Townships in Mason County, can you put a library in either Easton or San Jose?**

Unfortunately no. Having received the most recent EAV from Mason County for Sherman township and for Allen’s Grove Township in Mason County the amount the library would receive to support having another building would not be adequate. The general levy to the library for all of Sherman township would be $9,817.62 and $18,913.71 for the portion of Allen’s Grove that is in Mason County. Neither of these amounts is enough to sustain having a building, staff and materials in either of the two communities.

**Mason City Public Library District on the spring 2017 Ballot - Part 3 of 3**

**Why belong to a library at all?** Here are just a few reasons.

1. Reading

First going to the library improves reading. Research proves that regular access to books makes you a better reader and the library provides a wide range of books for all types of readers. Selecting books to read aloud to children and for children to read on their own not only improves their reading but selecting their own books at the library is exciting and fun for them. Research proves children that attend the library regularly read better than their peers.

1. Learning

Not only can you become a better reader at the library but you can also learn at the library. We all must go to school but sometimes this is not enough. Sometimes kids need a place or a computer to do their homework or what about the people who can’t afford college or a university but don’t want to stop learning. The library provides this place for them.

1. Staying Connected

Surprising as it may seem nowadays, not everyone has access to computers or to the Internet. The library has both for those who either don’t have it, are temporarily unable to use their own for whatever reason (your printer is out of ink, your computer has a virus, etc.), or for those who just want to come in and use the library’s.

1. Librarians

The library has very dedicated, professionally trained and knowledgeable staff who are dedicated to trying to meet your needs and help you in whatever fashion they can if they can. Whoever said librarians are just like search engines, except they smile, try their best to help you and have hearts summed up librarians well.

1. Summer fun

The library offers a summer reading program for children from birth through high school.

Not every child has a parent who can take them on fun days out or friends they can spend their time with. The library provides a place to come and a program they can participate in during the summer. Not only does the summer reading program help to prevent the summer slide while school is out but it also provides Lego club and summer science for those children who want to participate.

1. Programs & Socializing

The library is a fantastic place for adults to learn new things or enhance the skills they already have. Many classes, seminars and programs are offered at the library. Princess Etiquette Tea, Super Heroes party, fitness challenge, self-defense just to name a few.

1. Savings

The library can save you money. It is much more economical to go to the library to check out a book or get put on a waiting list if the book is brand new, than to pay $15-$20 for that same book that you will more than likely not read again. Same goes for magazines, audiobooks and more!

1. Community

The library is an integral part of a community in the services it provides. It is above all else a refuge and we should always, always remember that. Libraries have always been a safe haven for as long as they have existed. How many places can you think of that you can go to and be at for as long as you like that has free entertainment for absolutely everyone who comes in? Additionally, the library provides a place for activities to happen such as meeting places for organizations or groups, story hours, programs for both children and adults, etc.

1. Discussion

Libraries have often been the subject of controversy through the ages. Books have always presented a kind of challenge to conformity and we need libraries to keep this challenge a talking point. What books should or shouldn’t have a presence? What is suitable art for a library? Libraries keep the issue of censorship alive and challenge us to read outside our comfort zones and open our minds without condemnation.

These are just a few of the reasons why our libraries are important but really, it’s impossible to say why in a limited space. Just remember, libraries are filled with stories, books and resources that change people’s lives.