

n

11/27/07

3 | atutino@ithacajournal.com

# Support tax for Lansing Community Library

Diane Lauzun and Donna Scott  
/ Guest Column

On Dec. 11, the residents of the Lansing School District will vote to establish the Lansing Community Library Center as an independent public library of the school district. Last May a similar referendum lost by 32 votes. Since that time, the library has continued to grow. On average, 30 new patrons join each month and monthly circulation is more than 1,500 items. Computer use has doubled from 50 users a month last spring to almost 100 users in October. While this growth is exciting, it creates an increased workload for our all-volunteer staff and emphasizes the importance of a stable funding source and professional library guidance. Community need has moved the library beyond its original intent and humble beginnings. The Lansing community is demanding full-fledged library services and the Lansing Community Library is attempting to rise to the challenge. That is why the Friends of the Lansing Library is redoubling efforts to gain community tax support by holding an independent vote this December.

Currently, the Lansing library is not an independent library; it is a satellite branch of the Tompkins County Public Library. Along with the libraries in Caroline and Danby, the Lansing library receives many of its popular services through the Tompkins County Public Library. Beginning in 2008, that library will charge these three satellite "community libraries" fees for the serv-



Lauzun

Unfortunately, if this vote fails to pass, the library will be forced to close, permanently.



Scott

ices previously provided for free. Among other charges, it will cost the Lansing library \$5 for each inter-library loan plus a yearly fee for the van delivery service. A yes vote avoids these new charges and makes the Lansing library the 32nd member of the Finger Lakes Library System like the other independent public libraries of Dryden, Groton, Newfield and Trumansburg. All independent public libraries in the Finger Lakes Library System share a database and provide free inter-library loans to any library within the system, along with the convenience of book delivery to one's local library. If the vote passes, the Lansing library may be awarded a \$20,000 grant from the Triad Foundation to begin the process of computerizing its collection for inclusion in the database.

A yes vote also brings local tax money back to Lansing by making the library eligible for county and state money. The independent public li-

braries in Dryden, Groton, Newfield and Trumansburg receive substantial money yearly from Tompkins County and New York state. As a satellite of the Tompkins County Public Library, the Lansing library is not eligible for this county or state tax money. A yes vote also makes the library eligible for state and federal grants it does not qualify for now. It is these grants, combined with the basic county and state support, that will allow the library to maintain a streamlined taxpayer-supported budget. This, plus the fact that the renovated library building has no mortgage will keep Lansing library taxes low.

The library has received donations and grants from many local organizations over the past seven years. However, opportunities for ongoing support are dwindling quickly. Large donors are hesitant to continue support for a library that the community

does not financially support and are now tying future donations to the passing of the December referendum. Unfortunately, if this vote fails to pass, the library will be forced to close, permanently.

Residents of the Lansing School District are being asked to support the Lansing Community Library with an annual budget of \$105,310 a year. This budget cannot be increased or changed without another public vote. In addition, unlike other taxes, as the Lansing tax base continues to expand with the growth of the town, each homeowner's library tax burden will decrease. For 2008, the library tax will be 15 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value; the tax for a home assessed at \$150,000 would be \$22.50.

The Lansing Community Library is appealing, one final time, to Lansing voters for financial support. If you value what a library brings to a community and its residents, vote to save our library. Libraries provide free public access to information. Libraries strengthen communities, support schools and increase property values. Libraries help create thinkers, doers and dreamers. The library has more than 2,500 patrons. Please, don't force us to close the doors.

The vote will be held at the Lansing Middle School auditorium from noon to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 11.

*Diane Lauzun and Donna Scott are members of the Friends of the Lansing Community Library Center.*