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Dec. vote decides Lansing library's fate

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LANSING — Lansing residents will get a second chance to vote to form a library tax district for the Lansing Community Library Center on Dec. 11. If the vote fails this time around, library volunteers say the library may close for good.

The vote in May ran on the ballot with the Lansing School District budget and failed by 32 votes. The second go around for the vote is Dec. 11 from noon to 9 p.m. at the Lansing Middle

School auditorium.

If the vote passes, taxpayers would see a charge of 15 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value, which is two cents less than the earlier proposal.

Library fundraising committee co-chair Donna Scott said the library tax, if passed, would make up only one-half a percent of all the local taxes Lansing residents pay. She likened the tax burden to that of the solid waste fee residents pay.

Scott also pointed out that the library tax is not similar to other taxes because it is static without public approval.

ABOUT THE LIBRARY

► The Lansing Library is considered a reading room of the Tompkins County Public Library and is not eligible for certain grant money.

► If the library becomes independent of the Tompkins County Public Library it would not only become eligible for grant money but would also be able to borrow books from other libraries in the Finger Lakes Library System.

"This budget of \$105,000 cannot ever change without a whole new vote," she said. "It's not like other taxes that way where it will continually go up. That cannot happen without another vote. The taxpayers have a direct say in how much library funding (there is)."

Scott added that as one of the fastest growing towns in the county, if Lansing grows, the tax burden would go down as it spreads throughout the town.

The library could receive a \$20,000 grant from the Triad Foundation that would pay for

the library to digitize its collection, train staff and maintain the system for year, Scott said.

"It'd be a nice modern system like downtown," she said. "We wouldn't have to fiddle around with those little blue cards that we have to now."

Each book in the library would be bar-coded and entered into the electronic system.

The library's \$105,000 budget decreased \$3,000 since May.

Debbie Wells-Clinton, a volunteer for the library, said the library looked at other libraries in the area to compare what

See LIBRARY Page 2B

LIBRARY

CONTINUED FROM 1B

they pay for some services. She said some programming will be cut along with administrative costs such as bookkeeping and insurance.

If the library becomes a tax district a portion of the budget would go toward materials and funding for a full-time position.

Volunteers are also concerned about impending charges for borrowing books from the Tompkins County Library.

The county library Director Janet Steiner said libraries that aren't chartered and are not in the Finger Lakes Library System will have to pay a fee to the county library, but there are options on how to pay those fees.

She said libraries can seek funding from their respective municipalities that can be used to pay the county library for borrowing books.

"We've met with each of (the libraries) to say 'we think your municipalities should step up to the plate and support your local library,'" Steiner said.

Caroline, Danby and Lansing are the three libraries in the county that are not chartered.

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