

*- This is when we had to "vote no" to save the library. It was the 3rd time we had to go to the polls to save the library Feb. 6th May 15, 2007, passed Dec 11, 2007 and passed again against the Pace proposal to take away our tax.

Search the Star...

Bookmark Front Page
Bookmark This Page

Sign up to get a Friday email reminder whenever a new issue of the Star is published.

Your email:

[Front Page](#) [News](#) [Opinions](#) [Sports](#) [Around Town](#) [Entertainment](#) [Business/Tech](#) [Classifieds](#) [Events Calendar](#)

This Week's Star

- [Front Page](#)
- [News](#)
- [Opinions](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Around Town](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Business/Tech](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Events Calendar](#)

You are Here: [Front Page](#) [Opinions](#) [Editorial: Tearing Down Our Library](#)
[[News](#)] [[Weather](#)] [[Opinions](#)] [[Obituaries](#)]

Jan 16 2009 **Editorial: Tearing Down Our Library**

By Dan Meener

I have been extremely crabby since Monday. I think it comes down to this -- I have always loved it when people build things, and I hate it when people tear things down. I've never had much sense of scale about that -- when I was little I overreacted when a friend popped a balloon just for the heck of it. So when Dan Pace brought his petition to the school board to hold a vote to torpedo the Lansing Library he was inadvertently pushing my button in a big way

The people behind the library have spent ten years and plenty of their own time and money to give the community a library. They raised private funds for two capital projects to make it physically great before asking taxpayers to help keep it going. They were fiscally conservative -- no mortgage, no loan. They had book sales, bake sales, raffles. They paid for it and gave it to the community.

And what a gift! In a town of under 11,000 (less if you don't count the part of the Village that isn't part of the Lansing School District), the institution has 2828 library card-carrying patrons and counting. That's over 25% of every man, woman and child in Lansing. And counting. The tax is miniscule. For most people it is less than the cost of one new hard cover book per year. Take out two books per year and you've already made a profit.

Pace had a lot of his facts wrong when he presented the petition, but the key fact was right -- the library budget can be raised or lowered only by a public vote. The library isn't asking for a raise. He's asking to lower the tax to nothing. He says he isn't asking to abolish the library (he can't, actually), just to take it off the tax roles.

Last year Mr. Pace told me that it isn't just the library tax, but that town, county, state, and federal money would also go to the library. All paid by you and me. Multi-dipping at taxpayer expense. He said that if nobody took it for things we don't need, taxes would be lower. I was impressed with that argument. It's true -- look at all the flak Congress takes (and ignores) about the 'earmarks' they attach to important legislation, just so somebody can get something for nothing.

But I came to the conclusion that while I agree with it in theory, can you even imagine New York State, for example, taxing us less because we didn't try to get money back into our community? Can you imagine New York City saying, "We don't want State money, thanks, because it is more responsible of us and it would lower everyone's taxes."

I concluded that the only way to keep that money in our community is to do what everyone else does -- ask for it. That may take it out of my pocket when I want it to stay in, but at least me and my neighbors get something for it. In addition the library provides employment for a full time librarian and a part time clerk, good for our local economy and tax base. Public libraries increase property values, good for local homeowners. And it is providing a valuable ancillary resource to our schools that are dealing with their own huge budget problems.

He also told me that another taxing authority isn't to be trusted. Taxes may be low now, but what about the future? To that I say we are getting such a tremendous value for next to nothing now. If the library board gets out of hand and wants more money than we think they should have, let's get a petition then. I'll even sign it. But for now these are the people who gave us a beautiful facility and an amazing resource for free and then asked for a pittance to provide the services Lansing people were asking for that were beyond the capabilities of volunteers alone.

As I listened to Mr. Pace address the school board two things made me particularly crabby. The first was that I thought he was very generous in offering the services of others in his quest to make the library all-volunteer. I didn't notice him offering to volunteer himself. The second was the piece about multiple taxation.

To be fair, he didn't mention that in the Monday meeting. But in my conversation with him last year I thought he made some valid points about it.

But last December the school board asked us to approve two capital projects that

This Issue's Index

Lansing and Star Info

- [Business Directory](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Archive](#)
- [Advertise in the Star](#)
- [Links](#)
- [Community Office Hours](#)
- [Free Log-In / Privacy](#)
- [Submitting News](#)
- [Contact Us + Info](#)
- [Buy Star Stuff](#)
- [About Lansing](#)

Select a language

Social Bookmark This

Page On...

Review Us on
Ithaca Directory

Please Link to Us!
Here's how...

Email Signup

Sign up to get a Friday email reminder whenever a new issue of the Star is published.

Your email:

Events Calendar

January 2009

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Post New Event						