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New Library Vote Likely

by Dan Meanel

Friday, 10 April 2009



Does Lansing want its own public library? Answering that question has been like playing with a yoyo after two votes and the prospect of a third on may 19th. A group of Lansing people headed by Dan Pace is expected to gather enough signatures to put the library on the school district ballot for the third time.

"It has to be a properly worded proposition," says Lansing School Superintendent Stephen Grimm. "The first one that was submitted a couple of months ago was not properly worded in that it called for the voters to make a decision on something they could not control, which is the state of the library after being disbanded. In this case I am pretty confident that what they are going to bring back will be properly worded."

The Lansing library was originally founded as a volunteer organization, and supporters wasted no time in raising money and building a collection and community programs. They completed two capital projects that turned a crowded, dingy schoolhouse that had also served as Lansing Town Hall into a beautiful facility with stacks, display space, a children's reading room, and meeting rooms. When they presented their resolution to the taxpayers volunteers stressed that they were giving the community a gift of an entirely paid-for facility with no outstanding dept.

The battle started in 2007 when library volunteers petitioned the Board Of Education to add a vote on funding the facility with taxpayer money. While the library would be a separate taxing authority from the school district, it would share the boundaries of the district. The vote asked for 17 cents per thousand dollars of assessed real estate value. Library opponents won the first round by only 32 votes.

But supporters got the resolution on the ballot the following December. This time library officials only asked for 15 cents per thousand. The vote was 686 to 621, only 65 votes apart but a victory for library supporters. Since then the tax has been collected one time and the money has been used to hire a professional librarian. County money was also used to hire a half time assistant, and grants were found to pay for the computer system used to connect the facility with the rest of the Finger lakes Library system and other items.

Pace says he doesn't want to close the library, but only wants to remove another tax. He says he supports the concept of a volunteer-run library. But library officials say that a no vote will effectively close the library, forcing them to distribute many of the assets they have accumulated to other libraries in the county. Both sides are hoping for a decisive victory the third time around.



Dan Pace

By law a properly worded petition must be submitted to the school district no later than one month before the May 19th vote. Grimm says the school board will have no choice but to put the matter to a vote if the petition is properly worded according to the governing law.

"From communications I've had from people who are interested in presenting that it is my expectation that such a proposition will be presented in a timely manner," Grimm says. "That will most likely be added to our vote."

With reporting by Karen Veaner

Read more: The Lansing Star Online, Lansing, NY - New Library Vote Likely - <http://www.lansingstar.com/content/view/full/4745/67/#ixzz0CHUQD9pD>

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