

**LOCAL OPTION LEVY TO SUPPORT
COUNTYWIDE LIBRARY SERVICES
34-235**

Frequently Asked Questions

2015 Library Replacement Levy

Q. What would be the cost of the proposed library levy on the November 3rd ballot?

A. The cost and terms would be:

- This measure replaces a five-year levy that will expire in June 2016.
- The expiring levy provides 1/3 of WCCLS funding. (The other 2/3 of funding comes from the County's General Fund.)
- This replacement levy would run from July 2016 through June 2021.
- It would be a fixed rate of 22¢ per \$1,000 of assessed value, an increase of 5¢ over the current rate.
- If approved, this would be the first rate increase since 2006.
- In 2016, owners of a home with an average assessed value of \$255,408 (not market value) would pay about \$56, or \$14 more than paid in 2015.
- Taxes for future years would depend upon changes in assessed value.
- Estimated revenues from the levy in FY2016-17 are \$12,739,000 (estimated five-year total of \$69.2 million)

Q. Why is this levy proposed?

A. The levy would provide support for public library services countywide in five ways:

1. Support Public library operations:

- Maintain support for libraries and branches that serve all county residents: Banks, Beaverton, Cedar Mill, Cornelius, Forest Grove, Garden Home, Hillsboro, North Plains, Sherwood, Tigard, Tualatin and West Slope.
- Maintain open hours at libraries, increase hours at some libraries.
- Provide basic operational support for a new public library in Aloha and expanding libraries in Bethany, Cornelius and Hillsboro.

2. Support reading programs for children:

- Support children's reading programs that average over 280,000 child visits each year. This includes annual summer reading programs and literacy programs for preschoolers so more children enter school ready to read.
- Enhance summer reading activities designed to sustain reading retention between school years.
- Increase reading and learning programs for students, including online homework and tutoring services designed to improve school success for all children in the County.
- Increase literacy training in English and Spanish to develop reading skills for children.

3. Support books and materials purchases:

- Expand purchase of books, e-books and other materials that would be available to all users of libraries in Washington County.

4. Support library information and resources for job-seekers:

- Continue library services that provide information, resources and instruction to assist those seeking jobs.
- One out of five WCCLS computer users say library technology supports their employment or job searches.

5. Support Central support and outreach services that link libraries together:

- Maintain daily deliveries between libraries to fill patron requests for books and other materials.
- Maintain the WCCLS website and shared library catalog used by member libraries.
- Provide public Internet and Wi-Fi access at member libraries.
- Provide outreach services to special populations such as mail delivery of books to homebound residents.
- Support services and technologies designed to increase efficiencies in service delivery across the system.

Q. What happens to the current levy if the replacement levy is approved by voters?

A. The current five-year levy expires in June 2016 regardless of whether or not the replacement levy is approved.

Q. If the Library Levy is approved by voters, when would a property owner need to make the first payment? What about the last one?

A. If it is approved, taxpayers would see the Library Levy on their property tax statement beginning in October 2016. The last payment would be on their property tax statement in October 2020.

Q. How would the levy funds get divided between the various service areas?

A. Levy funds would be divided approximately as follows:

- Public Library operations (including addition of Aloha Library) 74%
- Central Support and Outreach services 23%
- Funds to support new or expanded library operations, emerging services 3%

Q. How much revenue would the Library Levy generate?

A. Replacing the expiring Library Levy would generate approximately \$69.2 million over five fiscal years. The year-by-year totals would be:

\$12,739,000 in 2016-17

\$13,249,000 in 2017-18

\$13,812,000 in 2018-19

\$14,399,000 in 2019-20

\$15,011,000 in 2020-21

Q. What would happen if the levy is not approved?

A. Because the expiring levy provides 1/3 of WCCLS funding, reductions in service levels would likely occur based on local library priorities:

- Reductions in hours, book purchases and programs,
- Reductions in central support and outreach programs,
- Operational funding would not be available for new or expanding libraries.

Q. Why is an increase in levy rate proposed?

A. The increase in levy funding will support five main service areas:

- Allow current member libraries to maintain services for the next five years, providing an annual increase in funding of 3% for each library; funding adjustments will allow some libraries to increase open hours to serve their communities.
- To provide basic operational support for new or expanding libraries during the levy period. This includes providing operational support for the addition of Aloha Library in 2016, providing increased support for Cornelius and Bethany libraries that are planned for expansion in 2017, and the addition of potential new library branches in Hillsboro in the latter years of the levy cycle. Expanded libraries will increase overall system use as they reach new or previously under-served areas of the county.
- Increase support for children's reading programs; increase support for school aged children by providing online homework and tutoring services designed to improve school success.
- Increase support for library collections including e-books and e-audiobooks subscriptions, and central purchase of popular materials.
- Maintain central support and outreach services that link member libraries together.

WCCLS Background

Q. How is library service provided in Washington County?

A. For over 39 years, public library service in Washington County has been provided through a unique partnership between the County, cities and non-profit library associations called Washington County Cooperative Library Services, or WCCLS.

- This proposed levy would provide funding for local public libraries in 12 communities, including: Banks, Beaverton (2 libraries), Cedar Mill (2 libraries), Cornelius, Forest Grove, Garden Home, Hillsboro (2 libraries), North Plains, Sherwood, Tigard, Tualatin, and West Slope.
- The proposed levy would also provide basic operational support for a new public library in Aloha and expanding libraries in Bethany, Cornelius and Hillsboro.

In this Cooperative Library Services partnership:

- The County provides centralized services for member libraries (for example libraries share a computer network managed and paid for centrally, rather than each library running its own library computer system). This allows residents to have access to all library collections through one shared catalog. The combined total collection size is about 1.6 million items.
- The County contracts with cities and non-profit associations that run libraries to provide free, public library service to all county residents. This allows communities to provide library service based on locally determined needs.
- Prior to the formation of WCCLS in 1976, over half of the county population had no library service. This included residents of some cities and all the unincorporated areas of the county. WCCLS was formed to collect taxes from all county residents (incorporated and unincorporated areas) and redistribute the funds to those cities and non-profits that ran public libraries in order to provide service for all residents.

Q. What is the County's role in WCCLS?

A. The County does three things:

- It's the primary funding source for public library service.

- The County provides support services to member libraries (such as a shared computer catalog, Internet access, delivering books among libraries, youth services programs, etc.),
- The County provides outreach to special populations (such as homebound residents), and manages the West Slope Community Library in the West Slope/Raleigh Park area, the only County-operated public library.

Q. What are the roles of Member Libraries?

A. Member Libraries do three things:

- Locally determine facility and service levels (fund, build, manage and maintain library buildings, supplement county funding based on locally-determined community service priorities),
- Locally determine operations (hours, programs, collections and staffing).
- Serve as the primary providers of public library service to all residents.

Q. How many people use libraries?

A. About half of all Washington County residents hold library cards (over 263,000 people). People visit libraries in Washington County about 3.9 million times a year.

Q. Is library use changing?

A. Yes.

- In FY2013-15 countywide circulation totaled over 12.7 million checkouts.
- Circulation of traditional library collections is changing. Checkouts of print materials (books, magazines, etc.) has leveled off in the last three years. Checkouts of media (music CD's, DVD's and Blu-Rays) have declined in recent years as more people use streaming or downloaded media at home or on their personal devices. Checkouts of e-books and e-audiobooks have more than doubled between 2012 and 2014. (2012 Library2Go circulation: 160,868; 2014 Library2Go circulation: 330,825)

Q. What is the history of WCCLS funding?

A. Until 1997, WCCLS operated entirely on serial levies authorized by voters.

- Between 1976 and 1996, WCCLS operated on serial levies that were approved by voters.
- With the passage of Ballot Measure 50 in 1997, the WCCLS serial levy was rolled into the County's General Fund (the County's permanent tax base). The Cooperative Library Advisory Board (CLAB) and the County Board of Commissioners agreed to a five year financial plan for WCCLS that included on-going funding from the General Fund.
- In addition, the plan called for WCCLS to supplement General Fund revenues with money from a WCCLS reserve fund that had built up in the early 1990's due to unexpected growth in property values. Until the reserve fund was depleted, WCCLS was able to maintain public library funding without having to reduce library services.
- That interim funding plan ended in 2003-04, when approx. 90% of the reserve fund had been expended (that was the plan).

Q. Why are local option property tax levies frequently put on the ballot?

A. Since Oregon voters approved Measure 50 in 1997, local governments and special districts in Oregon are prohibited from asking voters for increases in permanent property tax rates. When a permanent rate of a local government does not provide enough revenue to maintain service levels, local governments may ask voters to raise additional revenues through approval of a "local option levy." Voter-authorized local option levies for general purposes,

such as public safety or library services, are temporary and can be requested for a maximum of five years at a time.

Q. What has been done to address funding since Ballot Measure 50 passed?

A. Supplemental funding through a local option levy was authorized by voters in 2006 and renewed in 2010.

- In November 2002 county residents had the opportunity to vote on a library operating levy to enhance and maintain library operations for 2002 through 2008. That levy was defeated by a narrow margin of 611 votes out of over 145,000 ballots cast. (49.8% to 50.2%)
- A similar operating levy on the May 2004 ballot passed, but did not receive the 50% voter turnout necessary to implement the measure.
- Countywide service reductions were implemented as a result, including reduced open hours, book purchases, and programs for children and adults. As a result, WCCLS and member libraries reduced operational costs and adjusted spending, trying to limit the effect of service reductions on library users.
- In November 2006 a four-year levy was approved by 57% of voters to restore and maintain countywide library services.
- In November 2010 a five-year levy was renewed by 66% of voters to maintain countywide library services.
- That levy will expire in June 2016 and provides about 1/3 of total WCCLS funding. (The other 2/3 comes from the County's General Fund.)

Q. Where can more information be found?

A. A librarian can provide more information, or contact WCCLS at (503-846-3222, or visit these web sites for more information:

www.WCCLS.org/levy or www.co.washington.or.us/levies

*** Unless otherwise noted, sources for the statistical data included in the FAQ can be found on the www.WCCLS.org/levy webpage.**

Information reviewed by the Oregon Secretary of State, Elections Division for compliance with ORS 260.432.

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