

Recommendation to Pursue a District-Wide 1.25 Operating Millage

Introduction

The Finance Committee is bringing forward the following recommendation following a thoughtful and detailed review of the library's financial trends and future needs.

The library has not requested a millage increase in more than **30 years**, and throughout that time it has worked diligently to operate efficiently, stretch available resources, and provide high-quality service to the community.

As part of our review, the committee closely examined both past financial trends and projected income and expenses for the years ahead. We also analyzed how rising costs, service expectations, and facility needs will have an impact on the library's ability to remain strong and sustainable.

Based on this careful evaluation, we recommend pursuing a District wide **1.25 operating mill** to ensure the library can continue meeting community needs now and into the future.

An attached spreadsheet provides detailed financial projections used in this recommendation, including expense trends, millage revenue patterns, and staff-related planning.

Background

Over the past several years, the library has seen steadily increasing demand for services, expanded expectations for programming, greater technology needs, and rising operational costs. At the same time, our funding has not kept pace—largely because of the Headlee Amendment, which reduces the amount the library receives from property taxes to .7913 mills as values rise. Without additional revenue, the library will face growing constraints on hours, staffing, programming, technology upgrades, and essential building maintenance, and our savings will be significantly impacted as we are forced to rely on them more heavily to cover operating gaps.

In addition, the library's facility requires ongoing capital improvements to remain safe, accessible, and functional. These needs cannot be adequately supported through the current operating budget without compromising core library services.

Justification for the District-Wide 1.25-Mill Operating Levy

The recommended **1.25-mill operating levy** will allow the library to:

- **Cover rising operational costs** such as utilities, materials, and insurance
- **Fund technology upgrades** including public computers, Wi-Fi infrastructure, and digital services.
- **Support expanded programming** for youth, adults, seniors, and families.
- **Sustain current hours and services** without reduction.
- **Maintain adequate staffing levels** to meet user demand and ensure high-quality patron service.

- **Ensure long-term financial stability**, reducing reliance on miscellaneous funding sources, i.e. grants, donations, etc.
- Allow the library to **address necessary building repairs** and maintenance in a timely manner.
- Support **improvements** such as sidewalks, parking areas, furniture replacement, and accessibility (ADA) upgrades.
- Ensure the library's physical environment remains **safe, compliant, and welcoming** for all patrons.
- Prevent significant long-term costs that result from deferred maintenance.
- Reduce pressure on the operating budget, keeping operating funds focused on service delivery.

This level of funding positions the library to maintain the level of services responsibly while meeting evolving needs of the community.

Community Impact

This proposal supports a library that:

- Remains a **trusted community resource** for learning, literacy, and connection.
- Provides **equitable access** to information, technology, and educational opportunities.
- Serves as a **safe gathering place** and community hub.
- Strengthens workforce development, early childhood literacy, and lifelong learning.
- Invests in the economic, educational, and social health of the community.

Recommendation

On the ballot, the library will be asking voters to consider a District-Wide 1.25 millage, serving a distinct and essential purpose. The proposed millage is designed to stabilize the library's day-to-day finances and ensure that we no longer need to rely on our savings to maintain core services. This operating support will allow the library to meet rising costs, sustain current hours and staffing, and continue offering high-quality programs and technology resources.

Based on operational realities, long-term facility needs, and the community's expectations for a modern, responsive public library, **the Finance Committee recommends that the Library Board approve moving forward with a millage campaign consisting of:**

- **A District-Wide 1.25 operating mills for 4 years (exact dates to be determined)**

This represents a balanced, responsible approach that ensures the library can continue delivering exceptional service while caring for its facility in a sustainable way.

Conclusion

A strong library requires a stable and reliable financial foundation—both for its daily operations and for the long-term stewardship of its building. The proposed millage structure provides the best pathway to meet current needs, plan responsibly for the future, and honor the library’s commitment to serving every member of the community. The Finance Committee believes that with the Library Board’s support, the library can move forward with this millage campaign with clarity, transparency, and confidence.