Palmyra Library Vote

Frequently Asked Questions
About the Upcoming Library Vote to be held in October 2008 at the
Palmyra Library
127 Cuyler St.

On Tuesday, October 14, 2008 all eligible voters residing in the Town of Palmyra excluding those who also reside in the Newark School District will be able to vote from noon to 9 p.m. on the following items:

1. *Whether the Palmyra Community Library District shall be established to serve the Village of Palmyra and the portion of the Town of Palmyra that lies outside the Newark Central School District as authorized by Chapter 459 of the 2008 Laws of the State of New York, with a board of trustees consisting of seven members serving terms of four years, and with an annual budget of $285,000 to be raised by an annual levy of a tax upon the Taxable real property within the Palmyra Community Library District?*

2. *Whether to elect seven candidates to manage the Palmyra Community Public Library District of established pursuant to Proposition 1 to serve initial terms as follows: the three trustees receiving the first, second and third highest number of votes shall serve for four years, the three trustees receiving the fourth, fifth and sixth highest number of votes shall serve for three years, the one trustee receiving the seventh highest number of votes shall serve for two years.*

A listing of the candidates for the office of library trustee will be posted in the Palmyra Library upon receipt of their petitions.

In the following pages, we hope to answer the questions people might ask about this proposal. We hope that you will find answers here to your own questions. If, after reading this, you still have questions, please call the library director, Patricia Baynes at 597-5276.

1. What is this special election about?
- This election is being held to determine whether to establish a community "public" library. The election of 7 library trustees and the establishment of an initial budget will take place at this time as well.

2. What's the difference? I thought you were a public library?
- No, the Palmyra Library is a "free" association library. This means that the library is a private not for profit library established by the New York State Legislature. The library is chartered by the New York State Board of Regents to provide public library services to the Town of Palmyra. The Palmyra Library board is self-appointed.

3. Who is eligible to vote?
- All qualified voters who reside in the Town of Palmyra may vote, excluding those Palmyra town residents who live in the Newark School District.

4. Why can't the Palmyra town residents who live in the Newark School District vote?
- Those residents are in the Newark School District Library service area that was established in 2006. They support the Newark Public Library through an annual tax levy and also support the Palmyra Library through their town taxes. The approval of the Palmyra Community Library district will eliminate this double taxation.

5. Will people be allowed to vote by absentee ballot?
- Yes. Those interested in voting absentee can apply for an absentee ballot at the Palmyra Library, 127 Cuyler St. Applications must be received at least 7 days prior to the election if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter, or 1 day before the election, if the ballot is to be delivered personally to the voter

6. Where will I vote?
- The election will be held at the Palmyra Library, 127 Cuyler St.

7. How many votes are needed for the passage of the library district proposal?
- A majority of those cast in the election.

8. Who can run for the Board of Trustees?
- Any registered voter who has resided within the district for at least one year prior to the election may run for a seat on the seven-member Library Board of Trustees. Each candidate must submit an election petition signed by a minimum of 25 registered voters residing within the district to the secretary of the Library Board by September 12, 2008. Those interested in running for the board may pick up a petition at the library's front desk.

9. Will the Board of Trustees be paid?
- No. All library trustees will volunteer their service.

10. Why are we electing the Board if Trustees?
- To have direct representation such as citizens enjoy with all levels of government. Voters have a right to determine who will have responsibility for managing public tax dollars raised for library purposes. An elected library board will be directly accountable to the voters.

11. Will the public be informed about board candidates before the election?
- Yes. Information about the people running for a seat on the Board of Trustees will be available at the library and will be released to the local media. In addition, candidates will be encouraged to attend informational meetings scheduled for Thursday, September 25 at 7 p.m. and Tuesday, September 30 at 10:30 a.m.

12. How will the funding of the library be different?

- Simply put, we want to eliminate the partial funding now received through the Village of Palmyra, the Town of Palmyra, and the Palmyra-Macedon School District and replace it with library funding to be collected directly from the people.
- Collecting library funding through a direct vote is not a novel idea. Many libraries do so through their school district boundaries. The Palmyra Library is not able to do this because the Palmyra-Macedon School District is shared with the Macedon Public Library. Other area libraries that collect funding directly from the taxpayers are in Newark, Lyons, Clyde, Geneva and Naples. Residents of the new library service area will control the amount of money raised by the tax because they will (1) vote on the amount of the tax and (2) elect library trustees.

13. Who does the library serve?

- The library serves people of all ages in a rapidly changing environment. The library is "not just books" anymore. One of the fastest growing services is the use of library computers for Internet access and word processing. There are still many people who do not own computers, and the library's computers are in constant use by people in all age groups.
- While many people are regular registered borrowers, many others simply use the library on an "as-needed" basis to read newspapers, attend programs, conduct research, obtain tax forms, check e-mail, use local history resources, etc. It is a place for children to visit after school and is also used by literacy tutors. It is truly a community resource, and every week we see new library users.

14. The library seems OK: why are you proposing this change?

- We are doing this to secure the library's future and to guarantee the continuation of library services.
- At first glance the library may seem OK, but it is becoming more and more difficult to maintain the library services the community needs given flat or reduced funding from both public and private sources.
- We have relied on the generosity of the Town and Village of Palmyra. The Village gives $21,500 to the library and the Town gives $23,250 annually, which combined equals 31% of the library's budget. The library also receives $15,000 voted on by school district residents, which equals 10% of the library's budget. With only 41% being funded by local tax support, the library has had to curtail basic expenditures such as materials and staff.
- The library needs to establish a fair and equitable source of stable funding in order to provide needed library services to the community.

15. What are some of the library's specific needs?

- **Materials:** The library's materials budget has not kept up with the substantial increase in the cost of books and audiovisual materials. Our neighboring libraries spend more on library materials than the Palmyra Library.
- **Response to long-range plan community committee recommendations:** There is a need for more hours. We would like to increase our evening and weekend hours. It

was also evident that the library needs to purchase more materials, add computers and offer additional programming.

- **Building:** As you know the library has purchased the former Garlock office building on E. Main St. in order to gain more space. Operating costs at this building will be higher than at the present building.
- **Technology:** Through many years of fundraising and grant seeking, we now have an automated catalog and circulation system plus additional computers for Internet access and word processing. The Pioneer Library System has made a commitment to support a shared automation system ("OWWL Access"), in which library staff and patrons are able to see real-time availability status of all library materials across the four-county system. The Palmyra Library bought into this project early on and has reaped the benefits since its inception. The costs associated with this system will rise along with all other goods and services. Computer usage by the public has increased steadily and it not uncommon to have people on a waiting list to use our computers.
- **Staffing:** We have run the library with excellent staff for many years now. While staffing the desk is essential, so much happens "behind the scenes" that we need staff to work more hours than we are open. For safety reasons we also would like to have enough staff so that no one is working alone in the library. We have been very fortunate to have staff committed to working in the library, despite low pay and no benefits and we would like to keep them.

While the library has grown with the community's needs, we have stretched to our limits to meet increased costs and greater demands. Our needs are outgrowing the funding potential from current sources. The Palmyra Library needs a secure source of funding that is dedicated to its needs.

16. What happens if the vote does not pass?
- The library will continue to operate as it always has with its piecemeal funding. However without a dependable local fiscal base, library services will definitely suffer. We have already fallen behind our peers in many valuable areas such as materials, computers and staff hours, and the gap will widen.

17. How much money are we talking about?
- Our estimated total budget for 2010 is approximately $299,000. The tax portion we will be requesting is approximately $285,000. We are currently receiving the following amounts: Village of Palmyra - $21,500, Town of Palmyra - $23,250, and the Palmyra-Macedon School District - $15,000 for a total of $59,750 in tax dollars, which pays for only 41% of the library's operating budget. The 2007 operating budget for the Palmyra Library was $143,833. Utilities alone cost the library over $7000 in 2007. The amount needed for 2010 is a substantial increase over the previous total tax dollars because the library must play catch-up after so many years of stagnant funding and the new building will cost more to operate.

18. How much will it cost me?
- Based on the taxable population of the Palmyra Library District, the cost of raising $285,000 for the Palmyra Library is approximately $1.16 per $1000 of assessed

property value, or a total annual tax of approximately $103 for a house assessed at $88,000, less than $9 a month.

19. How does this tax relate to our town and village taxes?
- It is a separate tax entirely and is simply collected from the people who live within the boundaries of the Palmyra Community Library district. We will use the Town of Palmyra tax collector as our vehicle for collection.

20. Does the STAR exemption apply to the library tax?
- No. STAR applies only to school taxes. State law does not allow STAR to be applied to library taxes.

21. Is the property tax an equitable way of paying the local share of library expenses?
- Although some may debate the issue, this is the way educational institutions in New York State are funded, and the library is an educational institution.

22. Why doesn't the library charge for its services?
- By law, the library is not allowed to charge for its services within its charter area, which is currently the Town of Palmyra. It also cannot charge for services to anyone living within the Pioneer Library System.
- We have very few users who live outside the Pioneer Library System. While we could possibly charge those users, libraries have found that such charges result in very few dollars.

23. Can the amount raised for the library district go up in future years?
- The amount collected can only be increased by a public vote.

24. When would the library actually receive the funding from the library district?
- The library would receive its first payment after the collection of the 2010 taxes by the Town of Palmyra scheduled for January 2010.

25. What happens to the money now allocated to the library by the Village and Town of Palmyra?
- Upon passage of the proposition, the money from the Village and Town of Palmyra would no longer be needed for the library. The responsibility of deciding what to do with former library appropriations would lie with the respective municipal boards, so questions should be directed to those officials.

26. Will people be paying more for library services than before?
- Yes, the library is seeking more overall local funding than before because the local municipal allocations have not been meeting the library's fiscal needs.
- Funding will be consolidated into one equalized tax levy raised by the town tax collector and turned over to the library board. Village and Town taxes will not fund the library.

- "More" is a relative term, and a decision will have to be made by each voter as to the value to him or her, both individually and as a member of a family and of the community, of library services received in exchange for tax paid.
- In 2007 the average person in Palmyra paid $8.75 in taxes toward the library. The Palmyra Library received the lowest amount of public support per capita by far of all Wayne County libraries:

> Williamson Public Library - $68.65
> Red Creek Free Library - $52.03
> Sodus Free Library - $42.69
> Lyons Public Library - $41.12
> Wolcott Civic Free Library - $39.23
> Ontario Public Library - $38.37
> Clyde-Savannah Public Library - $33.47
> Walworth-Seely Library - $32.43
> Newark Public Library - $27.77
> Macedon Public Library - $24.01
> Rose Free Library - $21.09
> Marion Public Library - $20.54
> **Palmyra Library - $8.75**

27. Why don't you seek more grant monies and donations?
- Over the years the library has obtained numerous local and state grants. These grants must be used for specific programs and not for operating expenses. The library has also actively sought private donations, and the community's response has been generous. We will continue to seek grants and donations, but it is not realistic to think that these alone can fund library operations.

28. Why should I pay for the library if I don't use it?
- There are many reasons, from its intrinsic value to the community to its availability whenever you might need it for a reason you can't foresee. There is a good chance someone in your extended family or neighborhood uses the library. It is the keeper of valuable, irreplaceable local history materials, a resource for information, newspapers, magazines, computer access, tax forms, and copy and fax services. This question may best be answered by another question: Why not use it? It is there for you with everything from books to computer access plus the expertise of staff members with years of training and experience.

29. What are some examples of library use?
- In the year 2007, over 36,000 visited the library and more than 52,000 items were borrowed. The Internet computers were used 6,069 times.
- The library hosted 134 programs for people of all ages with a total attendance of 2,563.
- Programs in the past year have included art classes, after-school programs, pre-school story times, summer reading activities, class visits from area preschools and the elementary school, and teen nights.

- The Friends of the Palmyra Library sponsor monthly book review luncheons and run a successful annual book sale. Their proceeds help fund the purchase of library equipment and children's summer programs.
- The library provides home delivery to those who are not able to travel to the library because of a permanent or temporary disability.
- On a daily basis we provide reference service in person, by phone, fax and through e-mail contacts.

For more information, please contact the library director, Patricia Baynes at 597-5276 or *pbaynes@pls-net.org*.

Public information meetings will held on Thursday, September 25 at 7 p.m. and on Tuesday, September 30 at 10:30 a.m.