

October 2024

Three Rivers Public Library Service Contract

Fiscally responsible governance is a statutory duty and a top priority for this township board of trustees. Periodic review of contracts we are involved in is one of the activities we must engage in if we are to successfully execute our fiduciary obligations. Our current contract with the TRPL dates back almost ten years. You may recall this topic has come up at some of our budget work sessions the last couple of years. At those times there did seem to be a consensus that we would need to address this issue at some point.

We have kicked this can down the road for a couple of years now.

You may be wondering, why are we addressing this issue now? There are a few reasons.

1. The larger than normal inflation rate we have witnessed and endured for the last four years in our personal finances at home is very real for us and for our residents. It has the exact same affect on our township budget. When our expenses outpace our income we are obligated to make necessary adjustments.
2. As I mentioned before, the current contract is approaching the ten year mark. During that time our Township revenue has seen an increase of 18%. The cost of the library service contract has increased 56% during that same period.
3. Fabius Township does not levy a property tax millage for any purpose. We do not have a millage for fire protection, ambulance services, police protection, marine patrol, landfill passes, recycling, library services or road maintenance. We may be the only township in the area that does not tax its residents for services provided. Currently, all services provided come directly from our general fund.
4. Lastly, we are obligated to a six month notice to nullify the current agreement. We are currently six months into the 2024-2025 fiscal year, so from a contract viewpoint it makes sense to address it now.

Do we, as a board support the TRPL and its mission? Yes, I believe we do. I have not heard any of our board members state anything to the contrary. Saying we support the TRPL is by itself is not enough. As board members we are tasked with the additional responsibility of placing an actual monetary figure on that support. This is a difficult thing to wrestle with and there really aren't any easy answers, just hard choices.

We should carefully consider all funding options or possibilities regarding library services.

Daniel Wilkins
Fabius Township Supervisor