



Watertown City Council
Monday, September 9, 2019
7:00 p.m.

WORK SESSION AGENDA

Discussion Items:

1. Presentation by the City's Librarian and the President of the Library Board identifying a new funding option for the Flower Memorial Library.
 - a. New York State Educational Law 259. (Please see attached)



SCHOOL BALLOT INFORMATION

What does it mean to go on the School Ballot?

- Libraries can request funds directly from school district taxpayers by asking them to vote on a resolution placed on the annual school district ballot (New York State Education Law 259).
- School District taxpayers pay an amount for the library based on their assessed property value, just like they do for school taxes.

How does the library go on the school ballot?

- First the library board passes a resolution to pursue funds via the school district vote. Flower Library board passed a resolution to seek \$75,000 at the August 2019 board meeting.
- The library board, Friends group and volunteers circulate a petition asking that the library proposition be put on the school ballot.
- The library board attends a school board meeting to ask that the library's proposition be placed on the ballot.
- The school district publishes notice of the vote.
- The library supporters share information about the vote.
- Voting on the proposition and school budget occurs in May.

Why is Flower Library pursuing this option?

- The ability for the city to fund library books/materials has decreased by 80% over the past ten years.

How does a successful school ballot affect the community?

- Flower Library did a survey in 2018 and asked "What would make this library better?" The overwhelming answer was "More!". More books, more dvd's, more programs.
- Members of the school district have a choice about funding the library.
- By providing less than \$5 per year (based on a \$100,000 value), each taxpayer will be certain that Flower library will have enough money available for new items.

How does a successful school ballot affect the library?

- Funding for new materials will no longer be dependent on the city budget.
- The \$75,000 amount will allow the library to purchase more new materials than we can afford to purchase now.

How does a successful school ballot affect the city?

- Unlike other city departments, the library has the ability to obtain funding in other ways.
- Upon approval of the additional funds, the city will no longer have to budget for new materials such as books which is currently at \$13,000 in the FY 2019-2020 budget.
- This allows the library to be proactive and maintain a minimum level of funding for new materials.

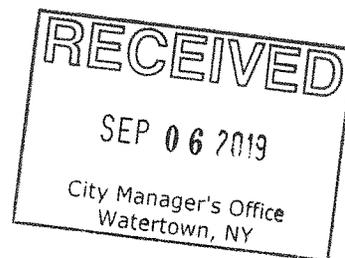


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September 3, 2019

Mr. Rick Finn, City Manager
City Hall
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Mr. Finn,

The Flower Memorial Library board of trustees voted at the August 2019 board meeting to pursue additional funding for the library via a school ballot referendum. This referendum allows the library to request funds directly from Watertown City School District taxpayers, as set forth in New York State Education Law 259.

The library will seek \$75,000 on the school ballot vote for new books and other items to compensate for the 80% decrease in materials funding from the City of Watertown over the past ten years. Whereas in 2009 the library received \$65,000 for materials from the City of Watertown, the 2019-2020 budget provided only \$13,000 for library materials. Although the Friends of Flower Memorial Library have worked diligently to raise funds to close this gap, and the board of trustees has appropriated some funds to close this gap, bolder steps must be taken to ensure the future of Flower Memorial Library.

A 2016 Pew Research Center study showed that over 90% of Americans consider the library to be "very" or "somewhat" important to their communities, and there is no reason to believe that Watertown is any different. The same study showed that about half of all Americans over the age of sixteen had used their public libraries at least once in the last year. Flower Memorial Library offers access to its collections, programs, and services to all members of the community at no charge, and without regard to race, citizenship, education level, economic status, or any other condition. It is truly a center of the community.

We believe that this endeavor will ensure future funding for Flower Memorial Library. We look forward to discussing this initiative with you further and would be glad to answer any questions you may have. There is information about this process on our website at www.flowermemoriallibrary.org/schoolballot.

Yours truly,

Carolyn Weldon
Library Board President