

**Project - New Kalkaska Library  
0.87-mill tax  
Lessons Learned**

- Project:** Proposal for a New Kalkaska County Library through the use of a 0.87-mill tax to be levied on residential and business properties in the county over 20 years. The passing of the mill tax would have raised an estimated \$625,000 in its first year and an estimated \$11 million over two decades for the new building and library operations.
- Type:** The new proposed library was a \$3.8-million, 17,000-square-foot facility to be located on county property near the Kaliseum Recreation Complex and behind the Kalkaska County Governmental Center. The blueprints utilized for this estimation were from the Caledonia Library.
- Timeframe:** The millage was placed on the May 7, 2013 ballot and lost by a 2 to 1 margin, defeated by 800 votes to fund a new county library building.
- Impacts:** Impacts of this millage increase were monetary, physical and knowledge based for the community. Monetary - due to the impact of the new proposed millage, or increase of .62, over 20 years, physical – due to the proposed size of the new building; current building size = 4,928 compared to new building size = 17,000 and knowledge based = current library holds 1.88 books per capita, compared to the state average for a library with a service area of equal size of 7.82 books per capita.

**Lesson 1:**

**Communication External – Meetings at the Library**

**Positive impact:** The Kalkaska Library Director, Administrative Executive, Friends of the Library were available at the multiple meetings held on-site. During these meetings the atmosphere was casual with information regarding the millage being shared with attendees. Questions were answered and explained to ensure understanding by all attending. The meeting time was also utilized to diffuse some misinformation that had come to the forefront. The county taxpayers that attended the meetings seemed to feel there was a need for a new Library.

**Negative impact:** Unfortunately these meetings were not well attended to offset the time and money spent in preparation of these meetings.

**What changes can be made or suggestions:**

**There is value in these meetings and the time spent preparing is still worth sharing ideas with attendees. Areas to improve: advertise more to gain higher attendance, encourage groups to meet at the library where information could be made available to them, and possibly commit to Open Houses on the nights the library is open late.**

## **Lesson 2:**

**Communication External – Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Kalkaska-County-Library/108228842574014>**

**Positive impact:** The information placed on Facebook was current during the election and continues to be an asset for the library. It was also used to address misinformation or questions brought forward from concerned citizens.

**Negative impact:** The people who read the Library's Facebook page are usually people who support the library. Possibly the site may have been passed on to someone who wasn't familiar with the library and its functions, but this is an unknown and not quantifiable.

**What changes can be made or suggestions:**

**This avenue will continue to be utilized due to its ability to reach the public instantly. Recent information shows an increase of 1600% in "likes" since the news regarding the Heffer donation has been made public.**

## **Lesson 3:**

**Communication External - Newsletter**

**Positive impact:** The newsletter also proved as an avenue to get the Library's message out to the community. The newsletters were mailed via bulk rate and sent to patrons of the library. E-newsletters were sent via e-mail at no cost. A metrics can also be utilized to determine how many E-newsletters were opened. There is only an assumption that the one's receiving the mailed newsletters are actually reading them.

**Negative impact:** Due to legal issues the newsletter could not be specific to the election regarding the millage.

**What changes can be made or suggestions:**

**The newsletter is a good source for positive information to be sent out to the public. It can be filled with facts and used as a way to inform the public of supporting the library.**

## **Lesson 4:**

**Communication External – Fact Sheet**

**Positive Impact:** The "fact sheet" was a 2-sided pamphlet disbursed at the Trout Festival parade, the library, outreach meetings, and Northland. The "fact sheet" was well distributed and factual.

**Negative impact:** Unknown

**What changes can be made or suggestions:**

**Distribution of the fact sheet is a constructive way of getting information out to the tax payers. It can be handed out during various meetings, booths or available at the library. Possibly the pamphlet could be used in a door to door campaign, however it will be necessary to determine where, when and who to distribute the pamphlet.**

**Lesson 5:**

**Communication External – Presentations to outside entities i.e. Townships, COA, CETA, St. Mary's, Kiwanis**

**Positive impact:** During most presentations only a couple questions were asked with the overall feeling of the group to be neutral.

**Negative impact:** At one presentation after the close of the meeting questions were vocally asked, however not allowing the question to be answered in the presence of the full body of attendees. At another presentation the group was frustrated and vocally against the millage.

**What changes can be made or suggestions:**

**These meetings are advantageous and should be used in the future. Possibly use volunteers or patrons to assist with the message. However, all information presented at the meetings must be factual and consistent to avoid any misunderstandings. If questions arise in a meeting that cannot be answered follow-up must occur in an expedited manner.**

**Lesson 6:**

**Location of new Library – During the millage the location of the new Library was to be located on county property near the Kaliseum Recreation Complex and behind the Kalkaska County Governmental Center.**

**Positive impact:** The agreement with the Board of Commissioners was for a free or low cost lease on this parcel. The building site was a 3 acre parcel, close to schools, county buildings and walking path.

**Negative impact:** Feedback from taxpayers and village officials were the location was too far out of town and could not be seen; drawing away from the downtown area. The above lease agreement was not a written lease, but a verbal one with a past BOC.

**What changes can be made or suggestions:**

**Since the lease agreement was not in writing, continual due diligence will be required to determine if the county attorney will draw up a lease agreement and if the agreement will be approved by the current BOC. If a lease agreement is drawn up and approved by the BOC the SPC will recommend to the Kalkaska County Library Board of Trustees the use of the firm: Sondec, Racine, Doren in Traverse City, MI.**

**Lesson 7:**

**Cost of New library – Proposal for a New Library for Kalkaska County through the use of a 0.87-mill tax to be levied on residential and business properties in the county over 20 years. The passing of the mill tax would have raised an estimated \$625,000 in its first year and an estimated \$11 million over two decades for the new building and library operations.**

**Positive impact:** If the millage would have passed the building would have been built. However, the voters decided 2 to 1 against the millage increase for a new library.

**Negative impact:** Taxpayers believed the library was too expensive, it was ill planned and did not reflect the state of the customer or tax base of Kalkaska. The voters decided 2 to 1 against the millage increase for a new library. The project was denied.

**What changes can be made or suggestions:**

**Seek monies from outside sources i.e. grants, donations, bake sales etc to assist with the building a new library.**

**To ensure taxpayers understand the new process, three different avenues can be explored:**

- 1. Land Trade with the Village of Kalkaska**
- 2. Utilize an Existing Building**
- 3. Leased Land Near the Kaliseum**

**Key factors to keep in mind during this investigation are:**

- 1. Size of the building**
- 2. Cost to build**
- 3. Cost to purchase existing building**
- 4. Remodel expenses**
- 5. Future operating costs.**