



## **THE SPOKES SPEAK - GEARED TO SERVICE**

### **Rotary Club of the North Fork Valley**

POB 1543, Paonia, CO 81428

WEB SITES: [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org) [www.rotary5470.org](http://www.rotary5470.org) [www.paoniarotary.org](http://www.paoniarotary.org)

Meeting Thursdays at Noon in the Paonia Town Hall

District 5470

Club 1180 - Chartered 12/20/22

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Guest Editor: Bain Weinberger

**LAST MEETING: October 10, 2019**

Former President Schott presided.

Visiting Rotarians: none

Key Guest: none

Guests: Judy Livingston – Library Board

Mary Gilbert – Sarah’s athletic sister, on her way to the World Senior Games

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- World Polio Day – October 24. All donations to the bucket that day will go to the Rotary Polio Eradication Fund
- PUB is having an Octoberfest Night on Monday, Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> in support of the Chamber of Commerce. \$1 from each drink will be donated to the Chamber.
- Ulli won the football pool with 9 correct. There were 5 entries.



*President Coombe with Paris Rotary President (left) and District Governor (right)*

#### **Program: Ballot Issue 7A – Delta County Libraries**

In Peggy’s absence, speaker Tracy Ihnot, communication and outreach coordinator for Delta County Libraries, was introduced by Judy Livingston, a member of the library board.

Tracy said she had been traveling around the county talking about libraries since her last visit to the Rotary club back in July. Rather than a traditional Power Point presentation, she showed a slide show of photographs she had taken at the various county libraries showing some of what the libraries do for their communities.

At her previous visit, she talked about why the library is important. Today she is speaking as a library patron, not as a staff member. Delta county libraries are unique in that each one was started and has been supported over the years by its individual community, starting back in 1909. A big change in the way the libraries are funded came in 1994 when the Special Library District was created. Property tax revenues now fund about

70% of the Library District's revenue stream. Another 10% comes from Delta County government. The balance comes from various sources, such as fines, fees, donations and small grants.

The last time the Library District received a mill levy increase was 1997. Although the mill levy of 3% is constant, the revenue derived from that fluctuates based on a variety of factors. Over the last 10 years there has been a steady decline in revenue. Since 2011, operating revenue has decreased by \$667,000, which is a huge percentage of the annual operating budget (the projected budget for 2019 was \$1.3M). It was \$1.9M in 2011. Most Library Districts in Colorado with similar revenue operate only a single library, not five.

A major cause for the decreased revenue is the Gallagher Amendment, which automatically lowers the amount of residential property taxes a special district like Delta County Libraries can collect from residential property owners. While the market value of residential property in the County has increased over time, the assessment rate has decreased from 30% to 7.15% since the Gallagher Amendment was passed in the 1980's. It is expected to continue to decrease. Therefore, the Library Board of Trustees voted to request a mill levy increase on the November ballot. It is Ballot Issue 7A.

A similar mill levy increase was placed on the ballot in 2013, but the issue failed to pass. Voters need to have sufficient information on why the increase is necessary if it is to pass this time.

Due to the reduced revenue, the Library District has had to reduce hours from 245 service hours per week to 169 service hours per week with a proportionate decrease in staff. Nonetheless, the libraries are very busy. In 2018, over 208,000 people walked in the doors, not including thousands participating in outreach programs such as at schools and senior centers. Many others take advantage of the libraries' Wi-Fi - some sitting in their cars late at night utilizing the service. Over 14,000 children and teens participated in 600 programs. Over 161,000 library books circulated in 2018, and over 32,000 sessions (over 88 per day) were logged on the public computers. Over 20,000 people participated in the programs offered. In 2013 there were 7,300 active library users. In 2018, there were nearly 10,000. It is obvious from these numbers that libraries are still needed and relevant.

What a "yes" vote means: An additional \$843,972 of annual operating revenue (an estimated 2.75 mills). The proposal is written in such a way that the library receives that same amount of money each year, regardless. The number of mills will fluctuate, but not the money received each year. This means the funding is not affected by the Gallagher amendment. The owner of a \$100,000 residence would expect to pay an additional \$19.52 per year. These funds will restore lost service hours and expand programs and services across the county. Focus areas will be expanding youth literacy and learning opportunities, adult education, senior outreach, broadening the book collection (more books), and maintaining technology.

What a "no" vote means: Each of the five libraries will be closed for a full service day and service hours will be reduced from 169 hours per week to 129 hours per week. No libraries will be closed. Most of the outreach programs will be discontinued because what staff remains will need to work in the library.

In addition to voting for the proposal, supporters of the library were requested to share with friends and neighbors why the library has worth. This could make the difference between the issue succeeding and failing. There is not a lot of time left.

## Q & A

Q: Isn't it about time for Delta county to provide more support for the libraries (as well a public safety) instead of sitting on a massive reserve of money?

A: The County provides 10% of the library budget: \$50,000 per year is provided for capital maintenance and \$87,000 goes to operating expenses. These amounts have not changed in years, despite rising costs for both. Getting an increase has been a high priority for the District Director and the Library board. Relations between

library management and both the city and county of Delta have not always been good, and the library management has been working to improve that relationship. The city of Delta did provide a \$30K grant to fix the elevator in the Delta library after a disabled person was trapped in there. The city owns the library building, but the library pays for all the maintenance and upkeep.

Q: What percentage of library funds are provided by Friends of the Library?

A: Approximately 10% of the annual budget comes from donations. Friends of the Library provide part of that.

Q: Who is setting property values in the County?

A: The assessment rate is set by a state wide formula.

Q: When the previous measure failed in 2013, was an analysis done to determine why it failed?

A: If 2013, the issue failed by 350 votes. This is a substantial percentage in a county the size of Delta. Polling research showed that there some voters who will never vote for any tax increase. However, another large percentage (about 18%) could have their minds changed with good information. So, success on 7A is dependent of voters having a good understanding of what they are voting for. Delta and Surface Creek have been major focus areas for voter education. Any voter education and outreach performed by library staff must be done on their own time as private citizens. No campaigning can be done on Library time. Library-approved flyers, one a Q&A regarding the measure, and another showing what a vote one way or the other means, are being made available at the libraries. These are intended to be “non persuasive” and can therefore be handed out by library staff. Advocates have their own separate handouts and social media presence.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS:**

Date	Speaker	Program	Member
10/17/2019	Pam Bliss	Service Activity Report	Pam Bliss
10/24/2019	Jim Farmer	Live the Bus Ballot Issue – Delta Public Schools	Barb Heck
10/31/2019		Marsha and Don Grant’s house	Fifth Thursday
11/7/2019			Mike Heck
11/14/2019			Ulli Lange
11/21/2019			Bob Lario
11/28/2019		no meeting	
12/5/2019			Betsy Marston
12/12/2019			Jackie Parks
12/19/2019			Kevin Parks
1/2/2019			Karri Polson

