



Impact of the Repeal of Home Rule on the Downers Grove Public Library

Downers Grove residents will be asked the question “Shall the Village of Downers Grove, Illinois cease to be a Home Rule unit?” on the March 21st ballot. Residents are asking how will this affect the library? The library’s income from property taxes will be cut by \$300,000 the first year if Home Rule is repealed.

What Is Home Rule?

Home Rule relates primarily to the powers of the Village government. Among other powers, Home Rule gives the Village expanded taxing authority, and exempts the Village from the restrictions of the property tax cap (imposed by the Property Tax Limitation Law). As the Village library, the Downers Grove Public Library is also exempt from the tax cap. Under the tax cap, the library’s ability to raise its property tax levy would be restricted to the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is less. Increases allowed under the tax cap in recent years have been 1.7% to 1.9% per year.

Lower Tax Rate Mandated for Library

State law mandates a limit to the tax rate at which a non-Home Rule library can tax without a referendum. According to the Office of the DuPage County Clerk, the Downers Grove Public Library’s tax rate will drop to that rate if Home Rule is repealed. This would result in income that is about \$300,000 less than is projected the library needs to offer the current level of services. With each year, as the tax cap limits are applied to the reduced tax levy, the gap widens between the actual income from the property tax levy and the amount projected to be needed to provide services. The library does not have any other major sources of income to make up the property tax revenue that will be lost.

Reduction in Materials and Services Necessary

To reduce expenditures to work within the reduced property tax revenue, the library would consider a combination of cuts. Library materials, including books, magazines, DVDs, CDs, and on-line reference databases account for approximately 15% of the budget. Adult and children’s programs, publicity, and other services are about 1%. Furniture, equipment, and technology are about 2%. As with most public libraries, salaries and benefits comprise 68% of the budget. Reductions in staff would likely result in reductions in the hours the library would be open. Future budgets would have to be adjusted further to account for the on-going restrictions of the tax cap in succeeding years.

Whatever decisions have to be made, it is crystal clear that repeal of Home Rule would damage the present level and quality of library services currently enjoyed by Downers Grove residents.