

NORTH CHATHAM FREE LIBRARY 2022 414 FUNDING VOTE

What is a 414 vote?

It is a proposition on the election ballot in November that allows taxpayers to earmark a specific amount of tax dollars for the library. If approved, the town will fund the library at the newly approved level, starting in 2023.

How much is the North Chatham Library asking for?

We are asking for an annual increase of \$35,000 to add to the current funding level of \$65,000 for a total annual appropriation of \$100,000. This level of funding would bring us more in line with other local libraries of our size.

How will this vote affect my taxes?

For each \$100,000 of assessed property value, you paid \$12.48 to support the library this past year. If the proposed increase had been in effect, your taxes would have gone up by \$6.73 per \$100,000 of assessed value. For example, if your property was assessed at \$250,000, you supported the library with \$30; the proposed increase would bring that support up to \$46.

The Town of Chatham is currently undertaking a property value reassessment process. When the reassessed valuations are filed on May 1, we will revise the paragraph above to reflect the new rate. While the assessed valuation of your home may increase, the total dollars appropriated to the library is a fixed amount. Therefore, we anticipate a significant decrease in the library tax rate.

Why is this increase necessary?

Most of our budget goes towards basic operating costs: personnel costs to keep the library open, building maintenance and other expenditures to meet our patron's growing demands. In addition to our print collection, we have significantly expanded the amount of digital material available to patrons, in the form of videos, online collections and streaming services. These electronic formats provide access to far more resources, but they are also more expensive than print. Our WiFi and computers are heavily used by the community, particularly during COVID. In a typical year, we serve as a meeting place for community groups and events, offering over 100 programs and gatherings for adults (online and in-person), as well as reading circles and summer activities for children.

The last increase to library funding in our town was in 2004. Library expenses have increased significantly over the past 18 years. Budgetary constraints have affected our ability to hire personnel and expand our hours of service, as well as reduced the money available to update the collections. It's time for the community to consider a new investment in the library.

Why doesn't the library seek more grants & donations and hold fundraisers instead of increasing taxes?

The library board and staff work hard to write grants and are very grateful for the donations we receive to meet community demand for services. However, the grants and donations are not predictable revenue streams and often come with restrictions that fall outside of general operating expenses. For the bulk of our operating costs the library needs stable funding to provide the level of service that our community deserves.

I live in the Village of Chatham and support the Chatham Public Library. Why pay for North Chatham Library, too? Libraries are a public good. A strong library enhances the quality of life for all town residents by serving as a community center and by offering opportunities for life-long learning. Libraries contribute to student success, social cohesion, and digital inclusion -- essential elements to a healthy and vibrant community. The North Chatham Library complements the Chatham Public Library, with programming and resources available to all in the Town of Chatham.

I don't even use the library so why should I pay for it?

We welcome you to come and see how the library has evolved. You can use our Wifi and computers for free or send faxes at a modest charge. You may be surprised to learn that many library resources can be accessed from your own home if you have a library card: eBooks, eMagazines, movies, on-line courses and even museum passes. We hope you'll also "check us out" in person by participating in one of the many programs and events we offer throughout the year