

Public Mandates and Priorities

PMAP - 7: Positioning Library Infrastructure Projects

Two changes in Indiana law have significantly changed the funding and approval process of public infrastructure and building projects.

First, Indiana voters passed an amendment to the State Constitution by referendum in 2010 which made permanent changes to the local property tax formula. The measure limits local property tax rates and places an encompassing "cap" on all local government spending.

Second, requests for funding beyond \$12 million for an infrastructure project must be approved by public referendum vote. So far, every referendum posed by Johnson County public entities since the law change --including one in 2012 for a new Franklin Branch -- has failed. This is mostly due to difficult local and national economic climates, and a pervasive political sentiment that all government entities should limit and/or eliminate spending beyond basic services.

Some referendums for public projects have passed in Indiana. In those cases, voters believed that additional public investment was necessary for the long-term economic, educational and social well-being of their communities.

Implications for JCPL

- With a robust public collaboration process, JCPL should develop a 10-year infrastructure and building plan that addresses the library system's current and future needs. The public, including taxpayers and stakeholders, should concur that the tax dollar investments are necessary and affordable.
- JCPL needs to share long-range infrastructure and building project plans with other local government entities, to keep them informed and to collaboratively develop community project priorities and timetables.
- JCPL needs to constantly monitor status of the entity's status within the property tax cap -- and make certain the library system is positioned for its fair share of local property taxes to ensure its long-term viability.
- JCPL must continue engaging and educating the public on the benefits and results of services and programs, so that the public can make informed decisions on appropriate spending to serve community needs.