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# Library supporters push for a special millage in Chesterfield

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Using the Chesterfield Library can sometimes be frustrating, admits Mary Jo Stine, head librarian. The computers aren't as helpful in tracking down information as they are at other places, and that unusual book you're looking for is probably not on the shelf.

That could change, however, with the township considering its first library millage. The Chesterfield Library Board has requested that a .7-mill issue be placed on a November ballot, and last week presented the township a list of 166 resident signatures backing the idea.

According to the board, 50 or more signatures requires a township to put a library millage to vote. Although the petition was informal, the board is asking officials to accept it as evidence of enough public interest.

The township board tabled the issue last week, so that its attorney could review the law in question and determine whether the millage petitions are valid. If not, the library will have to hire a lawyer to revise petition wording.

The former Trinity Library moved more than two years ago to its current location, a 2,000-square-foot facility in Bayside Mall (formerly Chesterfield Mall). According to Stine, it doesn't have nearly the amenities a library of its size should.

"For the present it's adequate," said Stine. "It won't be adequate for



Librarian Mary Jo Stine

Chesterfield's future. They'll be able to stay here another couple of years while the collection grows and the patronage grows... then we'll have to move to another facility."

Libraries are categorized according to the size of the community in which they are located. Stine said that Chesterfield receives little funding compared to others in its group, with a budget of \$70,000 compared to a \$257,000 average. As a branch of the county library, it is unable to state grants on its own.

"Your chances of getting (a grant) in this 'one-horse' situation are slim

and none," she said.

A .7-mill levy would generate \$390,000 and would qualify the library for state funding, said Stine, who noted that the request stems not from growing pains at the library, but from an attempt to make it more viable for patrons.

While New Baltimore's MacDonald Library (which benefits from a two-mill levy), has approximately 38,000 books and magazines for 6,000 people, Chesterfield has a collection of less than 12,000 for a population of around 27,000.

The levy also would automatically make Chesterfield an official library with the state, a status that would allow it to access the county's computer system for tracking books, and would allow card-holders use of any library in the county.

"That's probably the most important benefit to county residents," said Stine.

She said that it is hard to tell whether additional taxes for library services would meet voter approval.

"You wouldn't have a hard time explaining to the people that use the library," noted Stine, "but you may have a hard time getting the word out to people that don't know that the library exists, or those that want to (use the facility) but can't because the collection is limited."

The township board is scheduled to review the millage request at its next meeting, June 6.