



NEWS RELEASE

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June 12, 2009

Harford County Public Library to Hold Public Hearing

The Harford County Public Library (HCPL) Board of Trustees, in response to recent budget cuts due to the economic downturn, will vote on the necessity of closing the Fallston Branch at the June 18th Board Meeting. The branch closure is necessary in order to balance the HCPL Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 operating budget.

The recent May 29th budget reduction of \$800,000 (5%) is in addition to a previous 5% reduction for Fiscal Year 2010, beginning July 1, 2009. Together the two cuts total \$1.6 million dollars.

"This additional 5% cut was devastating, forcing us to take the unprecedented step in this county of closing a branch," said Audra Caplan, Director, Harford County Public Library. "We looked at every other possibility for achieving a balanced budget and none was sufficient to avoid a branch closure. It was with deep regret that we must take this action."

Prior to the cut in May, the Board had already voted for a budget that would reduce the materials budget by 5.4%, furlough all staff and close branches for five days, and reduce by two the number of branches open on Sunday next year. Additionally, over twenty positions have been frozen in FY 2010 to reduce expenses. Many other reductions to the budget were also made. The most recent decrease to the budget has presented the Board with a challenge to their leadership skills in identifying areas where reductions can be made with the goal of preserving quality

library service. Ultimately a balanced budget can only be accomplished by closing a branch or laying off a large number of employees.

In addition to the branch closing there will be employee lay offs and further reductions to the materials budget. Having been informed by County government leadership that the economic situation will not improve in the near future, the Board of Trustees' decision will downsize the library system in order to survive this economic downturn while retaining quality library service.

The Board Executive Committee and Library Administration's decision to recommend closing the Fallston Branch was made after evaluating every branch in the library system and weighing a number of factors, including which communities would be most adversely impacted by a branch closing and would have the most difficulty replacing these services. Specific issues factored into closing Fallston include:

- Age of building
- Branch is not easily accessible on foot
- Low walk-in traffic
- Cost savings
- Poor location and dangerous vehicle access in and out of the property
- Close proximity to newest branches, Bel Air (7 miles), Jarrettsville (8 miles) and Abingdon (9miles)
- Low percentage of computer usage compared to other branch locations

The Board of Trustees and the Library Administration understand that all the Harford County Public Library branches are integral parts of their communities. The library system has 200,059 registered borrowers that use the services of branches across the county. The choice to close the Fallston Branch was difficult but necessary. Harford County Public Library, Harford County Council and the County Executive are working together to see if there is way to avoid closure.

The HCPL Board of Trustees will hold a Public Hearing on the Fallston Branch closing before the Board meeting at 6:00 pm on June 18, 2009, at the Bel Air Branch, 3rd floor meeting room. For more information about the Public Hearing or the Board meeting call 410-273-5600.