

El Dorado County wants to restructure library tax

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County voters on Nov. 6 will be asked if they want a countywide assessment that would tax people equally.

The library system is divided into five zones, with all but one having passed a tax. That area is in the middle of the county, which includes Placerville, Pollock Pines and Cameron Park.



The taxes that are currently collected stay in the zone where the money comes from, with the general fund filling in a substantial part of the library budget. The countywide tax is estimated to bring in an additional \$180,000 to the library system. That is a small amount based on what the overall library budget is.

How the additional money would be distributed would be up to the Board of Supervisors. However, library Director Jeanne Amos will come up with recommendations for the board.

The goal isn't so much to raise more money, but instead make funding of libraries fair and equitable, as well as have a more solid base.

"The library funding is literally all over the map. It makes it difficult to run an effective library system because the funding is uncertain," Mike Applegarth, principal analyst in the county's Chief Administrative Office, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The proposed tax rate would be the same as what single-family residences in the Tahoe basin pay today – \$17.58 a year, with

a potential increase of 3 percent based on the Consumer Price Index. County supervisors picked the lowest fee that was being collected and opted to put that amount on the ballot. So, for some areas their library fee would be decreased if this passes in two months.

If two-thirds of the voters agree to the tax, it would replace any library tax currently in place. It would be good for 15 years.

If it does not pass, the South Shore and Georgetown taxes are set to expire in 2015. However, it is likely voters would be asked to renew those initiatives down the road.

Total library operations are \$3,334,010 for the 2012-13 fiscal year. Most of that money is from library taxes, with about 45 percent – or nearly \$1.5 million – coming from the general fund.

Branches also have “friends of the library” groups that help put on all the programs that are outside of a book being loaned.

Library usage in El Dorado County has increased through the years. In 2007-08, there were 85,000 library cards – 91,000 in 2011-12; there were 745,000 checkouts in 07-08 and 880,000 in 11-12; and in 07-08 there were 697 children’s programs and 1,027 in 11-12.

The county operates six libraries – in South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado Hills, Cameron Park, Placerville, Georgetown and Pollock Pines – and a bookmobile.

