

Thank you for selecting Kathleen Tickner and Nick Wimberly to represent the Fannin County Commissioners on the local library board. Both Kathleen and Nick are great choices and advocates for the Fannin County library.

First, I would like to make it known that I am not here tonight representing either the Mountain Regional Library System Regional Board of Trustees or the Fannin County Library Board of Trustees. I am here on my own behalf, and the purpose of this statement is to clear up some misunderstandings, misconceptions and misinformation about the library grant and any potential library construction project.

State grant funding was not bestowed to Fannin County or the Fannin County Public Library in January 2020 as recently reported by a local media outlet. The grant funding is a product of an application being filed to the Georgia Public Library Service, a funding partner's commitment to also join in a construction project, many library advocates at all levels of public and governmental interests championing the cause, and finally, the state of Georgia legislature approving the sale of bonds to support the projects the legislature approves. Being a recipient of state of Georgia grant funding for the purpose of a capital outlay project is no small feat. It requires years of diligence, advocating, and sometimes a little luck to be awarded the funds.

To access the funding, any library construction project requires a funding partner to ensure the project will be completed in its entirety and the grant amount is partially determined by the amount the funding partner is committing. No portion of the state grant funding can be used for the purchase of land or location, be used as a reimbursement for a completed project, or reimburse an existing account of funding such as a SPLOST account. The state grant funds can only be used to construct a new facility, rehabilitate an existing library or alternate location, and furnish the library with necessary equipment.

In regards to the Georgia Public Library Service's library standards and project square footage, there is only one requirement dictated by the contractual agreement to utilize state grant funding for a capital outlay project. The requirement is the minimum square footage must be at least 5,000 square feet. For reference purposes, the current Fannin County Library facility is 6,800 square feet. What is being referred to as a "standard" is in actuality a recommendation provided by the Georgia Public Library Service. In no way would a proposed library project for Fannin County which falls under the recommendation of a library approaching 20,000 square feet be held up due to the size of square footage of the project. The proposed partial renovation of approximately 13,000 square feet of the Whitepath building for the purpose of being used as a public library space has already been approved by the Georgia

Public Library Service, Georgia State Financing And Investment Commission, and the state legislature of Georgia.

The total cost of a forthcoming library construction project has yet to be determined. To suggest the construction project “would cost \$5 - \$8 million dollars” is false and irresponsible. Neither the local board of trustees nor the regional board of trustees have hired an architect, construction firm, or design firm to advise on such matters as design, build, furnishings, and timeline of the project. Until the library boards of trustees understands exactly where the project will take place, when the project will take place, and who will be chosen to lead the construction and design phases, the final associated construction and furnishing costs will not be known.

These grants funds were not bestowed to Fannin County nor should it be taken for granted that if these funds are not utilized then Fannin County will simply get another capital outlay grant for library construction or rehabilitation. These state grants are competitive. There are over 400 public libraries in Georgia, and there are always new library projects being added to the capital outlay menu. On average, only 3 to 5 capital outlay projects are approved by the state legislature annually.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to the commissioners of Fannin County. The commissioners and the library system continue to work towards providing seismic library service improvements to the citizens of Fannin County. It is much needed, and the benefits of a new, modern facility would be reaped for decades. There is much that can be added to Fannin County by embedding a modern library with amenities neighboring counties already experience.