

February 6, 2019

**Letter of Support
for a Proposed 2019 Legislative Action
for the Eudora Public Library**

The purpose of this letter is to support the Eudora Public Library (EPL), the Eudora Township, and the City of Eudora in the pursuit of specific State of Kansas Legislative action. This special bill presented to the Legislature would allow the Eudora Public Library to legally transition from a Township Library to a de-facto District Library. The proposed Library District would include the Eudora Township and the City of Eudora who have strongly supported the existing community library for over 50 years.

It is understood by elected Officials of the above parties that this course of action is desired and necessary in order to unify and simplify on-going joint Mill Levy funding, joint governance and future bond election powers of the library as the greater community's only public library. The Library's survival may depend on this major transition. Representatives and varied community advisors served as a working Legislative Committee engaged in preparation of the bill with the cooperation of the North East Kansas Library System, the Kansas Legislative Revisor, and current and former State Legislators who have generously advised the Committee.

Note that under current Kansas Statute, only *3rd* class cities and townships can partner to form a district library, making a Legislative bill necessary for any exception. Already operating in many ways as a District Library, EPL should be declared such and expected to comply with all other statutory requirements for governance normally required in the State of Kansas for District Libraries.

The existing library, located within the Eudora city limits, was incorporated in 1968 as a Township Library when the city of Eudora was a small *3rd* class city included within the municipal taxing authority of the Eudora Township. During the 50-year history of mill-levy funding, operation, and use of the library by the greater Eudora community, the sense of partnership has remained strong. Currently, City taxpayers provide an approximate 60%+ share of Mill Levy support for the library's total operation. Approximately 80%+ of the library users are now City residents. But Township Mill-Levy, grants and public donations are also necessary for the continued adequate funding, growth and survival of the library.

Currently the Eudora Public Library is still classified by law as a Township Library, and the City of Eudora has become a separate municipality. However, the 50-year Mill Levy partnership has continued via an awkward Interlocal Agreement between the City and Township approved by the State Attorneys General Office in December of 2017. The Agreement allows Douglas County to continue to assess the same mill-levy rate on both municipalities in support of the Eudora Public Library, but KS Library Statute prohibits 2nd Class City residents/voters from serving on a Township Library Board. The smoothest fix of our dilemma is to become a Library District--thereby offering a single solution to most or all short and long-term governance, funding and development difficulties.

The current sitting Eudora Public Library Board is a provisional board made up of both City and Township residents, some whose terms began prior to the understanding that the city of Eudora and the township were separated as municipalities in 2011-12. As such, City residents are no longer eligible to serve on the library board. Also prior to the awareness of this change in funding and governance requirements, the library board and greater Eudora community (City and Township) were already engaged in a capital campaign towards a new facility that will require unified community support and bonding authority.

The quest for a more professional library facility adds urgency to the need for unifying the governance and funding of the Library. The Greater Eudora Community *wants* its Library to survive and develop further. Great strides have been made in the last 10 years to professionalize the library. It has great programs, great staff and supportive patrons—but a very small and aging facility. Private donations from this small community towards a new facility are nearing \$500,000. The proposed new facility's cost is estimated at \$4 million and it may be possible to break ground within 2-3 years. For many of us, it is the appropriate time for the Library to transition to a District Library in order to maintain continued development, sound unified governance, funding authority, and to meet the growing needs of the Greater Eudora Community.

Your interest, assistance and support for this transition will be greatly appreciated!

Michael G. Braa

Eudora Public Library Board, 2010-2018 (President 2016-18)

Legislative Committee 2016-18

1032 E. 2100 Rd.

Eudora KS 66025

785-542-3829

braahaus@gmail.com