

# Officials halve Juniata County Library budget

Sierra Bolger

MIFFLINTOWN - Juniata County Commissioners heard patrons of the Juniata County Library at their Tuesday meeting in addition to other business.

Juniata County Library patrons said that decisions made by local officials to cut the library's budget in half will be felt by families throughout the county.

Resident Emily Kirk and the library's circulation assistant Christine May expressed their concerns about the library's budget being slashed from \$90,000 in 2024 to \$45,000 in 2025 to Juniata County Commissioners during the board's regular meeting.

"The decision is detrimental to our county for several reasons," said Kirk. "Families utilize the library to take their children to aid in their education."

Many of those families are without access to computers or the internet, she explained.

May thanked Commissioners for support through funding years prior. She explained the support has enabled the library to host many services, including a veterans group and Alcoholics Anonymous and GED classes.

Kirk also said small business owners often use their facilities as meeting spaces, and this is why it would be a huge loss for the library.

When contacted after the Commissioners meeting for comment, Juniata County Library Director Vince Giordano said he was made aware of the cuts via the county's Facebook page. He said that the library reached out through phone calls and emails several times urging the Commissioners to reconsider.

When contacted, Juniata County Commissioner Alice Gray said making budget cuts was not an easy decision.

"The County Commissioners are very proud to have the Juniata County Library as part of our county, and the decision to reduce the donation from the county was very difficult," Gray said. "However, the reduction of funds from the county should not hinder the library's services. The county will continue to maintain the county building that houses the library and assist with repairs as needed," Gray added.

There was no discussion at the meeting about how the library will have to adapt to continue under half its funding.

Juniata County Commissioners then heard from the Director of the Emergency Management Agency William Hummel, who was seeking approval of a professional services agreement between Juniata County and MCM Consulting Group, Inc. to provide services associated with updating the County's SARA Facility Plans in an amount not to exceed \$16,346 that will be covered by the EMA Grant.

Hummel noted that their plan has not been updated in nearly 30 years.

"These plans regulate commercial facilities in the county and the state that house hazardous materials," said Hummel.

"We currently have around a dozen facilities in the county," said Hummel.

The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), also known as Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), requires states and local governments to establish local chemical emergency preparedness programs for their communities.

Responsible for developing community plans to respond to chemical emergencies.

EPCRA also requires EPA to establish and maintain a publicly available toxic chemical release inventory of facility-specific chemical release and waste management information.

This information allows states and local communities to better understand and plan for the chemical hazards in their communities and at individual facilities.

"MCM Consulting specializes in emergency management and emergency planning," added Hummel.

In other news, Commissioners...

-Approved a proposal with OAE Systems, LLC. to replace a failing central plant controller at a cost of \$3,200. This piece is necessary for the County's environmental controls to function properly;

-Approved the resignation of Denna Freet from her position as a Fiscal Assistant with the Juniata County Children and Youth Services Department effective as of the end of business on Feb. 19, 2025;

-Approved the tax exonerations for Fermanagh, Milford, and Walker Townships;

-Reviewed the January 2025 departmental reports which included the Probation and Parole activities report as submitted by Michelle Beaver, Chief Probation Officer as well as the Sheriff's and Treasurer's reports submitted by their offices;

-Approve payment of checks in the amount of \$116,736.98.