

Sunnyside Approves Library Annexation

Measure to become
part of regional
system passes easily

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SUNNYSIDE — Voters here hugged their library in a big way Tuesday.

Sunnyside residents approved the annexation of the Sunnyside Library into the Yakima Valley Regional Library system.

The measure passed overwhelmingly, with just over 77 percent — 673 votes in favor of the annexation, 196 votes against.

"It sounds like it's in the bag," said Pat Kezele, co-chair of the Friends of the Library. "We're so proud of Sunnyside for supporting it."

The Yakima County Auditor's office had counted all but a handful of mail ballots and a few absentee ballots Tuesday evening.

The annexation comes with a property tax increase for Sunnyside residents. It will cost homeowners 49.6 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, or \$49.60 for a \$100,000 home.

The annexation won't be official until 2005.

The city of Sunnyside owns the library building but last fall cut funding to the library amid other financial woes.

The library is operated on city and regional dollars, with the regional system pitching in about \$370,000 a year for books, computers and staff.

The Sunnyside City Council practically banked on this vote passing, putting only \$65,000 in their budget this year to fund their portion of the library's operating cost.

The city would have owed \$115,000 this year had the vote not passed.

The Friends of the Library group started about a month ago to lobby for the library annexation. Kezele said she could find little dissent that the library was worth saving.

"Everyone seemed to see the value of the Sunnyside library," she said.

The tax is expected to generate around \$235,000 for library operations.

Regional library officials promised if the tax passed, the Sunnyside library would have unspecified new services and programs.

The Sunnyside library has around 8,600 library card holders.

The regional library system supports 19 libraries.

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