

Library Services for Buchanan County Cities without Libraries
July 1, 2021

General Statement from the Cities with Libraries of Buchanan County:

The Cities without libraries in Buchanan County are welcome to contract with the 28e group consisting of the Aurora, Fairbank, Independence, Jesup, Lamont and Winthrop Public Libraries. As a group, these libraries are called the Cities with Libraries of Buchanan County.

The Cities with Libraries of Buchanan County started the contracts for library services at \$2.00 per capita, in an attempt to make it affordable to bring everybody on board at a reasonable rate. The increase per year is \$1 per capita, and the rate for fiscal year 2021-22 will be \$12.00 per capita. The current rate is approximately 22% of the cost of providing library services, as the average city per capita rate is over \$52 in Buchanan County.

The Cities with Libraries of Buchanan County (CLBC) are exploring the idea of changing the contract and possibly decreasing the increase per person per year.

As much as everybody would like to have “free” libraries, they cannot be “free” to residents unless they are supported through taxes. Just like fire protection or law enforcement, it costs money to provide services to the community. There are salaries and wages, materials, equipment, facility costs, the investment into software and digital resources, programming, etc.

The Cities with Libraries understands that this is a time of tight budgets and tough choices when it comes to cities and their resources. The group has brainstormed ideas for the cities without libraries, such as doing fundraisers, taking donations, or voting on a library levy to help pay for the services. Each city has to sign the contract and provide the funding, but the money can be raised in methods other than through taxes if that works best for the community.

Please let the CLBC know what questions you have, and we will do our best to answer those. Thank you for considering the options for library services. The CLBC Board meets twice annually, in October and in April. You are welcome to attend those meetings. To find out the dates of the meetings, call or email one of the library directors within the county. Currently they are Jackie Oliver in Aurora, Angela Berg in Fairbank, Laura Blaker in Independence, Becky Burke in Jesup, Angie Happel in Lamont, and Nina Payne in Winthrop.

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Haven't these cities been paying for library services?

Public libraries in Iowa are typically funded by their own city, county, state, and through small revenues like fines and fees. Each city with a library allocates funding to the city library to pay for services for the residents of that city. The county allocates funding to pay for library services for county residents in Buchanan County. The county funding covers only rural residents, not those who reside within city limits. Funding for library services from a city without a library usually comes with an agreement or contract with a library, city or agency for that purpose. Some of the cities in Buchanan County have paid for library services in the past and some have given a donation. However, all the cities without libraries have not consistently paid for library services. The Cities with Libraries in Buchanan County (CLBC) have requested that all cities without libraries pay for library services at a level of \$12.00 per capita for the '22 fiscal year (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022). Contracts for library services are due June 1. Hazleton, Quasqueton, and Stanley currently contract for library services. The cities of Rowley and Brandon have chosen not to contract for services.

Will county residents continue to receive library services?

Yes, Buchanan County pays for library services. Rural residents of the county will continue to receive library services and will not be affected by the new library services agreement. It is those who reside within the city limits of a Buchanan County City without a library who are affected. There are currently (7/16) no contracts with Brandon or Rowley, which means there are no circulation or computer services for those residents. All may still attend library programs and come to the libraries to browse and read.

Since we've received library services in the past, why are you requesting funding from the cities without libraries now?

Libraries and the people who work in them are geared towards serving people. We enjoy helping people, and do not want to turn people away from the library. It was easier not to address the issue and provide services, but it wasn't feasible to continue to provide these services without funding. The enforcement of signing a library services contract for cities without libraries has been in effect since July 1, 2011.

How much is being requested for library services? How does this compare to funding from other sources?

The contracts being offered by the Cities with Libraries of Buchanan County began at \$2.00 per person and have increased \$1.00 per year thereafter, not to exceed 75% of the average city support per capita. The amount for July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022 is \$12 per person. The request started out very low to allow cities to build up to the capability of paying a larger dollar amount for services. 75% of the average paid by the cities is a rule of thumb recommended by the State Library of Iowa. The cities of Aurora, Fairbank, Independence, Jesup, Lamont and Winthrop have libraries and each respective city allocates funds to support their library. The average city support per capita (person) in 17-18 for library services was \$52.36. The average for Buchanan County library services funding for rural patrons is approximately \$13.55 per capita.

I live in Brandon/Rowley and am in the Independence Community School District. Why don't my children receive library services?

Brandon and Rowley are part of the Independence Community School District. However, none of the taxes for the school are received by the public library. The public libraries have completely different funding streams, being funded through their respective city and county (allowing for services to the rural residents). When it comes to funding, the public libraries and the schools are completely separate entities.

Have you talked with the cities without libraries about the request for funding?

A library director from Buchanan County met with the various city councils to let them know that requesting money for their residents to continue to have library services would most likely be coming down the pike. The library directors voluntarily assigned themselves to a city, asked to be on the agenda, and attended one of their city council meetings. This happened during the winter of 2008-2009.

The next communication was a letter addressed to the mayors, city councils and city clerks. The invitation was sent the middle of March, 2010, to each city hall in the county. It was an invitation to the joint meeting held for all city officials in the county to discuss library services and contracts at a meeting scheduled in April, 2010. The joint meeting took place at the Winthrop City Hall on April 13, 2010. All mayors, city clerks and city councils were invited...both those with and those without libraries. During that meeting there was a lot of discussion about library services and payment for them. One speaker was a library director for Dubuque County who told how things happened when her county went through a very similar process.

The cities with libraries then developed and entered into a 28E (joint) agreement to become the Cities with Libraries in Buchanan County (CLBC). The 28E outlines and gives CLBC the right to contract with cities without libraries. In November, 2010, all cities without libraries were mailed a letter and a contract. The letter outlined the agreement and requested that each city sign the contract and pay \$2.00 per capita in order for their city residents to continue to receive library services. That amount goes up \$1.00 per year until it reaches a cap of 75% of the average city funding for libraries within Buchanan County. The initial contracts were due by June 1st, 2011.

For all the cities without libraries, we began the process early and sent the contracts out before the cities were deep into budget discussions for the next fiscal year, working hard to be fair and to communicate fully about the process and expectations.

Are cities without libraries in other counties expected to pay for library services?

Over 240 cities in Iowa contract with other cities for library services. This is considered a fair share contract, with cities paying a fair share in order for the residents to benefit from library services. According to the Iowa Code, all cities are obligated to provide support for library services to their community.

256.69 Local financial support.

Commencing July 1, 1977, each city within its corporate boundaries and each county within the unincorporated area of the county shall levy a tax of at least six and three-fourths cents per thousand dollars of assessed value on the taxable property for the purpose of providing financial support to the public library which provides library services within the respective jurisdictions.

Is my city locked into a long term contract if we sign this contract?

No. The contract automatically renews, however, a city may terminate the agreement prior to a fiscal year by notifying the Cities with Libraries of Buchanan County Agency (CLBC) by Jan. 31st preceding that fiscal year. If a city would decide to establish their own library, for instance, they could notify us in January of 2022 and open their new library in the summer of 2022.

What should we do if we want to continue to receive library services?

If library services are important to you, you should talk with the people who will make the decision about whether to sign the fair share contract. Those are the city council members and mayor of your city.

You may want to speak with your elected officials individually, or you may decide to organize a group of residents for this purpose. Council meetings are probably the most likely forum for this; however, each city is different in the way they handle public comments. It would be best to check ahead of time to see how and when you can make your voice heard.

If my city decides not to sign the contract, can I purchase a card for library services?

The choice to continue or discontinue services will be made by each city when they decide whether or not to participate in the Fair Share Contract. According to Iowa Code 256.69, all cities are obligated to provide support for library services to their community.

Free public libraries (tax-supported libraries) strive to give service to anyone who walks through the door, regardless of income, background, gender, age, occupation, or ethnicity. Of course, the city or county in which that person resides must provide funding for that library for this to remain true. If libraries were to begin to accept money from individuals in return for a library card, then public libraries would no longer be able to provide services regardless of income or financial status. This would be compromising one of the core values public libraries have been founded on...equal access to information. Therefore, library cards are not available for purchase.

How will library services change for me if my city decides not to sign the contract?

You will be able to come to the library and browse, read at the library, participate in programs and events, or meet with others. You will not be able to do anything that requires your library card. Services that would no longer be provided would include checking out books, DVDs, audio CDs and other materials from the collection, using the computers, using online subscription services provided by the library, and downloading ebooks, audiobooks, movies or magazines from the library's online sources.

Can I just go to another library outside of Buchanan County for library services?

Public Libraries are all in the same situation as far as being tax-supported entities. Across the state, over 240 cities without libraries contract for library services. If your city does not contract with anyone for library services, then it is likely that you will not be provided library services from other libraries in the state.

How does this compare to other services contracted for by cities, like fire protection and law enforcement?

Fire Protection

Fire Protection for county and city residents without their own fire departments is organized by

township. Area townships tax for fire protection, currently at a maximum of \$0.6075 per \$1,000 valuation. This is required by law and paid to the city providing that service to them. Many of the area townships are at the maximum level as outlined per Iowa Code. The city with the fire department maintains the equipment and there are mutual aid agreements for coming to the aid of areas needing backup with additional firefighters and equipment.

For example; a township with a valuation close to Brandon, over \$6,000,000; would pay over \$3,600 for fire protection at the maximum, or typical level.

Law Enforcement

The Sheriff's Department contracts with the cities without local police departments. This service is also required of incorporated cities by law. The Buchanan County Sheriff's Department has a long history of contracting for services, but for many years the contractual amounts stayed the same. In the last few years, the law enforcement contracts have gone up \$2.00 per year, per capita. The cost in the new fiscal year, 2021-22, will be \$52 per capita. Again, using Brandon as an example, the contractual amount would be \$16,068.

Library Services

The difference between the provision of these services for entities not having their own Fire Departments, Law Enforcement Departments, and Public Libraries is the enforcement behind the Code of Iowa. The Code of Iowa states that all incorporated cities must support library services, but there is no enforcement of this portion of the Code (256.69 Local financial support). Therefore, if it is to be enforced, local entities are responsible for doing so. Most cities without libraries comply by participating in such contracts, with over 240 cities contracting with a library or group of libraries for services. Again, using Brandon as an example, the contractual agreement for library services in 2021-22 would be \$3,708

Are you willing to negotiate?

The current rate that is contracted is 22% of the costs of providing library services. The Cities with Libraries of Buchanan County recognize the budget difficulties for cities and for very small cities in particular. We are discussing decreasing the annual amount of increase per person. The library directors and others involved in the 28E are open to talking with individuals or groups about the situation.

Please let the CLBC know what questions you have, and the group will do our best to answer those questions. Thank you for considering the options for library services. The CLBC Board meets twice annually, in October and in April. The public is welcome to attend those meetings. To find out the dates of the meetings, call or email one of the library directors within the county. Currently they are Jackie Oliver in Aurora, Angela Berg in Fairbank, Laura Blaker in Independence, Becky Burke in Jesup, Angie Happel in Lamont, and Nina Payne in Winthrop.