



Save Our Library- Grant County Oregon Committee

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July 17, 2025

Hon. Judge Jim Hamsher  
John Rowell, County Commissioner  
Mitch Wilson, County Commissioner  
201 S Humbolt Street  
Suite 280  
Canyon City, OR 97820

Re: Comments for July 22 Public Hearing for funding the Grant County Library.

Dear Grant County Court Members,

This letter is a joint effort from members of the **Save Our Library – Grant County Oregon Committee**. We are a group of concerned citizens representing the diverse communities across Grant County. Though we vary in age, occupation, location, and life experience, we are united by one common goal:

**To protect the essential resource that is our public library.**

Our committee was formed on June 18, 2025, in direct response to the announcement of upcoming public hearings regarding the future of the library. Since then, we have held five meetings, averaging around 15 attendees. In a short time, we have launched both a website and a Facebook page, which currently has 173 members and continues to grow.

In addition, our efforts have included circulating a petition to Save the Library, which has garnered 709 signatures from residents throughout Grant County. These 709 individuals agree that *“Closing this library would leave a significant gap in our community’s ability to grow, learn, and thrive.”* We are committed to representing and supporting every person who signed the petition and voiced their concern. To that end, we present the following information for your consideration:

Firstly, our Library contributes to our rural county in many ways including:

- The library is more than a building full of books, it is a gateway to knowledge, culture and community connection, it encourages personal growth, lifelong learning and opportunities for face-to-face community socialization.
- In addition to free library cards for children, it provides early literacy/school readiness.
- Provides internet access for those who may not have access otherwise.
- Access to eBooks and downloadable audio via *Libby* which is important for those who are unable to physically come to the library due to distance or accessibility issues.
- Access for our patrons to the free Sage library system, which provides access to 17 different libraries for loaning books and other media that are not available in our library.
- Encourages socio-economic development by offering accommodation for out-of-town guests, new and prospective residents.
- Provides a place of refuge from extreme weather conditions such as cold, hot, and smoky days.
- Community outreach such as delivery of books to the senior assisted living center, summer reading in the parks, and summer internships.

Secondly, the important actions we are taking:

- Pursuing a Grant County Special Library District: We continue to research and prepare to form a special library district, including defining boundaries, drafting a ballot measure, creating a service plan, and building county-wide support.
- Community Outreach: Ongoing meetings, public information campaigns, and volunteer recruitment to ensure broad support and awareness.
- Alternative Funding: To ensure we explore every option, we are also researching alternative funding sources. These include potential grants from organizations such as **The Roundhouse Foundation**, **The Ford Family Foundation**, and the **Oregon Community Foundation**. We are actively building partnerships and working alongside individuals from neighboring communities who share our commitment to the success of rural Oregon. However, grant writing and exploring these options take time.
- Collaboration: Engaging with other special districts and local leaders to coordinate efforts and share resources.

Finally, the key findings we have found so far:

- Special Library Districts in Oregon: A library district is a county-recognized special district governed by an elected board. It is not a nonprofit or a private business. Funding comes from property taxes already allocated for “special districts” (such as recreation, cemetery, or hospital districts) on property tax statements. Creating a district requires voter approval and will NOT increase taxes; it will reallocate current special district taxes.
- Other Counties’ Experience: Many Oregon counties have formed special library districts to stabilize funding. Some, like Josephine County, lost their libraries and later restored them through a special library district.
- Timeline: The earliest a special library district measure could be on the ballot is May 2026, with funding available no sooner than November 2026.

In order to pursue any successful planning, we need answers regarding the court’s plan for the library:

1. Will the Court delay any final decision to defund the library until the residents of Grant County have a fair chance to form a district and secure alternative funding?
2. Will the Court work with us to preserve the library building and collection during this transition?
3. Will the Court respond to our previous letter (submitted July 9) and provide clear communication to the public?
4. If the library is defunded before new funding is available, what will happen to the staff, building, and collection?

Moving forward, we ask for the County Court’s support and collaboration. We have formally submitted key questions that require answers to develop a clear and effective plan. The Grant County Library is a vital cornerstone of our community, and we urge the Court to allow time for a sustainable solution. We remain committed to working together to ensure the library remains open and accessible to all.

Respectfully,

Save Our Library- Grant County Oregon Committee