The Western Branch Project: A Community Resource for Madison and Mayodan

There is great interest in Western Rockingham County about the consolidation of the Madison and Mayodan libraries into a new Western Branch Library. As Director of the Rockingham County Public Library and the Rockingham County Public Library Board of Trustees, we would like to present some facts about this project and clear up any rumors.

In late 2005, Rockingham County Commissioners requested RCPL Trustees (Rockingham County Public Library Trustees) initiate a conversation with the towns of Madison and Mayodan to discuss consolidation of both existing branch libraries. A public meeting was held on February 22, 2006 at the Madison – Mayodan Recreation Center between RCPL Trustees and the mayors of Madison and Mayodan to discuss this proposal.

Also in 2006, the towns of Madison and Mayodan appointed four residents from each town to a Merger Study Committee. This committee met several times over the Spring and Summer that year to discuss issues and priorities related to the new Western Rockingham Branch library.

In June 2007, the Rockingham County Public Library was awarded a $15,000 LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) planning grant from the State Library of North Carolina. These funds (requiring no local or federal match) were used to complete a Space Needs Study in May 2008, which was used to guide the initial design of the new library.

On September 10 2007, Rockingham County Commissioners voted to put out an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) to select an architect for potential designs for a new Western Branch library. At the same meeting, the commissioners also approved the formation of a Building Oversight Committee to oversee the merger process including fundraising and building design. The Building Oversight Committee met for the first time on November 15, 2007 at the Government Center in Wentworth. In late 2007 the RCPL Trustees established a fundraising committee, and pledged to raise at least 50% of the cost of construction for the new library.

In June 2008, the Rockingham County Public Library established a gift fund with the North Carolina Community Foundation that will be used for private gifts intended to fund construction of the new library.

In August 2008, at a meeting of the Library Building Oversight Committee, Rockingham County Manager Tom Robinson discussed a funding formula for the new library where 50% of construction costs would be raised privately, with the County providing 25% and each municipality providing 12.5%.

On September 8, 2008 the Mayodan Town Council committed to the proposed funding formula calling for the town to repay a Rockingham County loan of no more than $312,000 toward the construction of the new library. The motion carried unanimously.
On September 9, 2008 the Rockingham County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to approve a funding plan for the proposed new library as follows (per 2008 estimated costs): total costs for the design, construction, and furnishings of $2,500,000, to be paid for with $1,250,000 in private contributions, $625,000 from Rockingham County and $312,500 each from the towns of Madison and Mayodan. The County Commissioners plan assumes that Rockingham County will borrow funds for their share of the funding formula, and Madison and Mayodan will each pay the county over a 20 year period to cover their commitment.

On September 11, 2008 the Madison Board of Aldermen by a 5-1 vote agreed to commit up to $250,000 toward construction costs for the new library. This action was reported in the September 16, 2008 issue of the Madison Messenger.

During the January 28, 2010 Rockingham County Public Library Board of Trustees meeting, a resolution was passed supporting the naming of the new library the “Madison-Mayodan Public Library.”

As of October 2010, funds have been approved by the County Commissioners for use by the Rockingham County Public Library to clear the building site and prepare the detailed drawings for the construction of the New Madison – Mayodan Public Library. The funding for this work has come from funds the County had available for this project and the Western Rockingham Friends of the Library.

During the October 26, 2010 Madison Budget meeting, the board of Aldermen voted to commit up to $312,500 toward construction costs for the new library. The motion carried unanimously.

The proposed funding formula for the Western Branch is a mix of Madison Mayodan funds (up to $312,500 each), $625,000 from Rockingham County, with additional funds provided by Friends of the Library groups and donated funds from across the county.

Although this may not seem like the ideal time to start a major construction project, the Madison and Mayodan branch libraries have reached the end of their service life and neither has staffing to provide full service library services. Both libraries are in need of renovation work. The Madison Library has no room to expand. While the Mayodan Library does have some room for expansion, the options would be limited without taking much of their parking area. Neither library is able to enrich their collection due to space considerations, making it more difficult for patrons to find materials they need.

The Madison Library does not have a meeting room available to the public, while the Mayodan Library’s meeting room is shrinking in size because we have moved part of the collection into the meeting room. The availability of internet accessible computers for patron access is restricted by the size of the libraries. Most job seekers need to have access to computers and the internet to fill out applications and do job
searches. Also, students need these computers to do homework assignments, especially those who do not have internet access or computers at home.

Starting the project soon will allow Rockingham County and the Cities of Madison and Mayodan to take advantage of the current reduction in contracting and materials costs by architects and builders due to the soft economy. During the August 2nd, 2010 Library Building Oversight Committee meeting, this was confirmed by Katherine Peele of L3SP Associates (the Architecture firm contracted for the design of the new building). According to L3SP calculations, contracting and materials costs for this project could be reduced up to 20% if groundbreaking for this project starts soon. One cost has already been eliminated from this project: real estate. This new branch will be built on land donated by the Dalton McMichael estate to Rockingham County specifically for the purpose of a branch library serving Western Rockingham County. An early 2006 valuation of the donated by the Rockingham County Legal Department lists a total value of $211,733 for the property.

The Madison Library was built in 1940, with an addition in 1967. The Madison branch library lacks a meeting room, and parking is limited to a small gravel lot and whatever public parking spaces are available on the street. Due to the date of construction, interior spaces were not designed for the use of computers and other modern technology. There is no break room for staff. The children’s area consists of two small tables and a collection of children’s books stored in plastic tubs. There is no room for children’s programming; children’s events must be scheduled at the Mayodan branch on the days it is open. The heavily-used genealogical collection is running out of room. The Madison branch library has inadequate storage, to the point that printing paper and other supplies are stored in both public restrooms.

The Mayodan branch Library was built in 1978. Space for books and other materials is limited to the point that the North Carolina collection has been moved into the meeting room. For several years the meeting room has also had to serve as a storage area for donated books and other materials. A long horizontal crack in the masonry is visible on several walls. Roof leaks have occurred and repeatedly repaired at this library, resulting in repeated damage to ceiling tiles and carpet. Both libraries lack adequate shelving space, which means official policy for several years has been the removal of one book from the collection for every new book ordered.

The square footage of the original design for the new building has been reduced somewhat to save on construction costs. The current design for the new library is 12,500 square feet with space for approx. 46,000 books. The design includes a computer lab room, approx. 8 to 12 computers for public use, a quiet reading room, and a large meeting room accommodating up to 75 people that may be subdivided for smaller events. This design will accommodate the combined staff offices of both existing branches and a generous and inviting children’s area. The interior design has been revised several times to increase the number of group study rooms and public computer workstations. There will also be a fenced-in outdoor area for children. The donated property for the new library is situated next to Midtown Shopping Center in Madison and
is bordered by Burton St. and Ayersville Rd. Plenty of parking will be available. The new library will be open six days a week, and operating hours will be comparable to current hours at the Eden and Reidsville branch libraries.

Rockingham County officials have been extremely supportive of this project. We realize that County Commissioners have many projects and issues competing for their attention and we are grateful for the time and attention devoted to the Western Branch project. In addition to administrative support for this project, County Commissioners have agreed in principle to pass any construction costs savings (due to the current economy as discussed earlier) on to Madison and Mayodan’s share of the funding formula by reducing their share from the maximum of $312,500. We especially appreciate the personal attention of the Commissioners, The Town of Mayodan, The Town of Madison, Tom Robinson, the County Manager, and his staff, the Western Rockingham Friends of the Library, and the citizens of Rockingham County.

Free public access to print and online information resources can lead to lifelong learning. Elaine Biggs, a local resident who home schools her children makes just that point in a recent email:

“I am sending you this email to let you know my experience with the Rockingham County Public Library. I have homeschooled my children since kindergarten, and cannot even begin to tell you what an invaluable resource the library is to my family and this community. When my children were young, the picture books and first readers were such a wonderful way to start my children on the path to a lifelong love of reading. Through the years, we have used several of the reference books and biographies for reports or just for learning more about a subject. Of course, I must say over the years we have come to know the librarians personally and know they are a vital asset to the library. My children have always felt comfortable asking them for help, and the librarians have always been enthusiastic to provide assistance. The Rockingham County Public Library is such an invaluable resource to families and the community.”

Michael Rose, Chair, Rockingham County Public Library Board of Trustees
Michael Roche, Director, Rockingham County Public Library
**How You Can Help:**

- Send donations to: Western Rockingham Library Gift Fund  
  Rockingham County Public Library  
  527 Boone Rd.  
  Eden NC 27288

- Join the friends of the Western Rockingham County Libraries by visiting the Madison or Mayodan branch. Membership is $10 for individuals and $15 for families; a lifetime membership is available for $500.

- Support the library’s gift building fund by shopping at the used bookstore at 103 S. Second Ave. in Mayodan. It is open from 10 AM to 5 PM Fridays and from 10 AM to 2 PM Saturdays.

- For more information about the new library, call Rockingham County Public Library Director Michael Roche at 336-627-1106