

## **Peter White Public Library Township Advisory Council History**

In 1989 the Peter White Public Library (PWPL) Board of Trustees began a Long Range Planning process. A committee of Board members and members from the general public worked with students and faculty from Northern Michigan University. In June 1991, the final report of the Long Range Planning Committee was presented to the Board of Trustees.

One of the issues identified in that report was a need for expanded long-term library funding; in part this was due to, a changing user demographic with over 30% of library usage coming from the Township residents. The Library Board established three committees to address these issues: Township, Endowment and Finance.

The Township Committee had been meeting with surrounding townships concerning the millage with the goal of placing a millage on the ballot in 1992. The Committee met with Chocolay Township, Marquette Township, Powell Township, Sands Township, Skandia Township and West Branch Township.

The first library millage election was held in August 1992. Approving the 1.0 mill request were Chocolay, Marquette, Sands and West Branch Townships. The request was not successful in Skandia and Powell Township. The issue was again placed on the ballot in Skandia and Powell Townships in 2000, with the same result. Skandia Township residents approved the first township millage in 2002.

A critical issue for each of the townships was establishing a method of oversight for township millage funds. PA 254 of 1891 did not allow Board members to serve unless they were City of Marquette residents. There was much discussion about the possibility of reopening the legislation to allow Board of Trustee membership from outside of the City of Marquette, but the Board was unwilling to make these changes. The language of PA 254 of 1891 gives the Board of Trustees many advantages-including a perpetual millage. The benefits of changing Board member residency, and losing the benefits afforded by PA 254 of 1891, was perceived as being too dangerous to the future security of PWPL.

Upon the successful passage of the four township millage elections, the Board of Trustees established the Township Advisory Council in 1992. Each of the townships providing library millage support was allowed to seat two members on the Township Advisory Council (TAC).

One of the main roles of the TAC is to serve as a conduit for communication between the PWPL and the townships it serves. TAC members are expected to update the Township Board following each quarterly meeting of the TAC. TAC members are also asked to provide recommendations for improving PWPL services to township residents.

Although it is not a governing board, the TAC provides input into library policy and insight into how the PWPL can better serve township residents. Over the years many improvements have been a direct result of TAC member input. Library Links (books by mail), township book drops, township programming, and the PWPL building expansion.

The TAC has continued to serve the PWPL and the townships with dedication since 1992. Members have changed over the years, but the group still plays a valuable role in the operations of the Peter White Public Library.