C&G NEWSPAPERS
candgnews.com

NOVEMBER 20, 2019
Vol. 32, No. 47

Mount Clemens - Clinton - Harrison
Journal

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# $100K library renovation was true 'community effort'

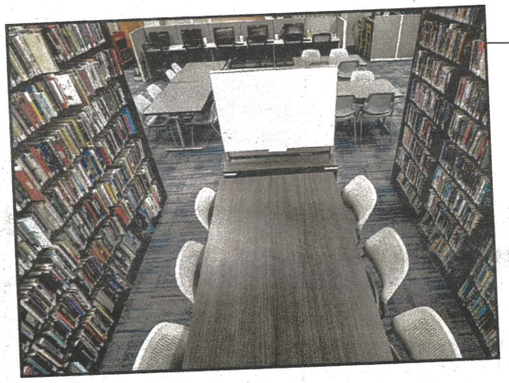
BY NICK MORDOWANEC
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HARRISON TOWNSHIP — Nearly 10 years to the day after the Harrison Township Public Library first opened its doors, it has concluded its first major renovation.

Originally established as a result of the Macomb County Library closing its doors, the keys were handed over to Harrison Township so it could operate as a volunteer library. Space was limited, funds were lacking, and bookshelves were literally placed on a shuffleboard court tiled into the floor.

A small millage was approved in 2014, with a full-time funded library opening

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**RIGHT: Harrison Township Library Director Melissa Goins, left, stands with library associates Mary Mahoney, of Harrison Township, and Bonnie Haines, of St. Clair Shores.**
**LEFT: A study area with a smartboard is one of multiple new additions to the Harrison Township Public Library.**

Photos by Deb Jacques

# NEW COMMISSIONER, MAYOR BEGIN NEW TERM

BY ALEX SZWARC
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MOUNT CLEMENS — A new term is underway in Mount Clemens government.

A special City Commission organizational meeting was held Nov. 12, a couple of hours after elected officials were sworn in.

At the meeting, rules and procedures of the commission were reviewed.

In the mayoral race Nov. 5, Laura Kropp edged out incumbent Barb Dempsey by less than 200 votes, with 49.9% of the vote.

Kropp, 41, previously served on the Mount Clemens City Commission and the Mount Clemens Community Schools Board of Education.

Since the election, Kropp has met with several key staff members, discussing what the first priorities are.

"It's nice that I'm not starting from zero because of all my commission experience, and I have a good relationship with them," Kropp said.

She believes the most important role as mayor is to be the communicator between

See NEW TERM on page 4A

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# Library

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in 2015. Library Director Melissa Goins said she and the library board knew the library would eventually need updates.

"While the library has been growing and getting better ever since, the space remained a hodgepodge of furniture on a shuffleboard court," Goins said. "It was time for the space to reflect the growth of the library."

That wish was granted in January, when the library board voted to spend about $100,000 of its savings on updates. Along with creating a more welcoming space, the renovations are also aimed to please members of the public who asked for particular things.

Such requests included better sound management, better lighting, study areas, reading areas and a meeting room space — what Goins referred to as "lofty goals" on such a limited budget.

Dwane Adle, an architect and interior designer with Comprehensive Design Group, was brought in to assess the space and address some of the board's proposed upgrades. Goins said Adle "did a spectacular job" with his design, fulfilling both the budget and the majority of the initial goals.

Harrison Township-based companies were involved with the project, including APEC Electric Co., John VanAssche Painting, Omega Floors Inc., Roger's Cabinets and Shoreline Companies Inc.

"The project was going to take a little creativity and a lot of help to stretch the budget as much as possible," Goins said. "Since we began as a volunteer library, our biggest asset has always been a strong group of volunteers that love the library and want it to succeed. And our second-biggest asset is our generous community members.

"Both groups regularly support projects to help make our community a better place. As soon as the seed was planted that the library could use community help to pack up and reassemble the library, and in turn get more for our community with the budget, it seemed like a no-brainer to do it."



**A new reading area offers residents great natural light.**

Photo by Deb Jacques

Due to space being transformed three times weekly for children's programming, versatile furniture was selected. New open-area tables were designed specifically for the space.

Some items on the "wish list" put the project over budget at first, including soft seating in the children's area, mobile tablet tables, lounge seating and a drinking fountain with a water bottle filler. However, they were subsequently funded and included in the renovation.

Goins said open group collaboration spaces were added in lieu of enclosed meeting areas. A future community meeting space is on the radar potentially.

"We certainly got a lot of bang out of the budget and, for the most part, accomplished many of the goals we hoped for the project," she said. "The biggest challenge was the space itself. At just under 4,000 square feet, the physical space of the library limited what could feasibly be accomplished."

Now the library — which celebrated its 10th birthday Oct. 24 — has a new layout, a high-top study area with seating for eight students, a reading nook, children's computers, more space for DVDs, and new carpet, paint and furniture.

"As a library director, I'm so incredibly proud of our new space for so many reasons," Goins said. "First and foremost is the community effort that went into creating it. The way all of these people came together to accomplish this project is remarkable and inspiring. The previous volunteer library, as well as the updated space, are both creations by the community for the community.

"I don't have the words to describe how exceptional it feels to be involved in community projects like that. I can only say that I feel incredibly grateful to be a member of the team."

*Call Staff Writer Nick Mordowanec at (586) 279-1118.*





