

Bradley J. Slagh
Ottawa County Treasurer



News Release

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OTTAWA COUNTY TREASURER PAYS OUT \$1,020,671 IN LIBRARY PENAL FINES

Grand Haven, Mich. — Bradley Slagh, Treasurer of Ottawa County is sending out over \$1,020,000 of checks to local libraries from fines collected by Ottawa County Courts

Ottawa County Treasurer, Bradley Slagh announced today the payout to libraries in the county, of the fines that are collected through the courts from criminal violations and civil infractions. These checks, worth a total of \$1,020,671.94 will be mailed out of the County Treasurer's Office on July 17 to the nine (9) libraries in the county.

The Michigan State Constitution of 1963 requires that all penalties collected for violations of the state penal laws be divided into court costs, statutory fees, and penal fees. The penal fines are placed in a library fund to be used for the support of public libraries and a county law library.

“In recent years the total has ranged from \$700,000 to over \$950,000 depending on the amount of citations written using the state penal code and the fines levied by the court,” Slagh noted. “The libraries in the county will notice a solid increase in the total fines collected and disbursed this year, up almost \$130,000 from last year's \$891,902.20.”

LaVonne Marshall the Director of the Coopersville Library commented: “Penal Fine revenue is a vital source of funding for the Coopersville Area District Library, making up approximately 20% of the library's annual budget. Although the amount received from the county will vary from year to year, it usually is in direct proportion to the library's materials budget that supports both print and non-print materials including books, periodicals, DVD and digital collections. The library would be hard-pressed to operate at its current level of service with the annual penal fine distribution it receives through Ottawa County. Most patrons are unaware that a Michigan public act established in 1964 mandates the distribution of a portion of the fees collected for motor vehicle violations within a county be distributed to libraries within that county, and that the amount distributed be in direct correlation to the population that library serves. Since 1964, there have been many attempts to divert penal fine revenue from its intended purpose to support local libraries. The Library of Michigan has made it its purpose and mission to educate legislatures about the importance of upholding Public Act 59 as it was originally intended, to fund local libraries.”

For more information contact Ottawa County Treasurer, Bradley Slagh at bslagh@miottawa.org or call 616-994-4505. Contact information for LaVonne Marshall at coolm@lcoop.org or call 616-837-6809.