San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item V.

To: JPA Operations Committee

From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services
Carine Risley, Deputy Director of Library Services

Date: May 7, 2020

Meeting: May 12, 2020

Re: COVID-19 Phased Reopening Plan

Background

San Mateo County Libraries are closely monitoring information about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and have been studying the implications of current and projected local and statewide health orders. The health and safety of staff and library users is our top priority.

The Library JPA Operations Committee and Governing Board held an emergency meeting on March 13, 2020 to discuss our level of emergency response to COVID-19. The difficult decision was made to close our libraries starting on Monday, March 16 to help mitigate the spread of the coronavirus in our community.

On March 16, the County Health Officer issued a Shelter in Place (SIP) Order through April 7, (which was recently extended to May 31). Compliance required a suspension of all in-person services, including information services, programming, events, outreach to our communities, technical instruction, literacy support, public internet access inside our buildings, check-outs and pick-ups of physical library materials, returns of library materials, and access to our in-library computers.

We successfully transitioned our workforce to telework in a single day. Staff were able to quickly adapt their technological skills, creativity, and service ethic to the new environment and have mobilized to provide dynamic, high quality, enhanced virtual services to our communities.

With the current extension of the SIP to the end of May and the limited easing of restrictions, staff has begun to develop plans for phased reopening of San Mateo County Libraries.

Discussion

As COVID-19 pandemic conditions evolve, and health orders and other applicable guidance are updated, San Mateo County Libraries staff are preparing to begin to return to library worksites and provide meaningful services that flexibly adapt to dynamic circumstances and emerging community needs.

On the recommendation of public officials and after consultation with JPA members, the Library Director will transition library operations as needed and, on a case-by-case basis, to the appropriate phased level of service. Re-establishing our facilities as local access points allows us to address public needs in each local community. Priorities will include support of socio-economically disadvantaged families and older adults for whom online services have been less accessible. Social distancing guidelines for the public and staff will be observed at all times.

Operations to get physical library materials and other critical resources to community members will be safely re-established when allowable, including but not limited to, mailout services to process library holds and curbside services for our community members to quickly and conveniently retrieve library materials to enhance their home environments. Partnerships with community organizations will provide vital assistance as we prioritize need and increase access to library and safety net resources.

The phases below build upon the Levels of Emergency Operations presented at the March 13 Emergency Meetings and update our approach to reflect the extent to which the environment and conditions have changed in these unprecedented times.

Phase 1: On-site Planning and Preparation
Allows a limited number of staff into library facilities to begin phased reopening measures. There is no public access to the building at this stage. On-site staff will wear face coverings and work in staggered shifts, with a minimal number of staff on-site at a time to ensure social distancing. Intensive preparation for curbside pickup, holds delivery, and the implementation of mailout service begins. Staff will design new workflows, customize site-specific best practices and guidelines, prepare furniture, equipment, and collections for limited public access, following guidelines for safe handling of materials. Off-site teams will continue to telework to support on-site staff and virtual services.

Phase 2: Customized Curbside Services
With continued relaxing of SIP, staff will begin phased public services outside the buildings. Through curbside pickup, library materials and other services will be packaged and provided at the curb, using contactless procedures by staff wearing face coverings. Staff will continue mailouts and coordinate contactless home deliveries. Off-site teams will continue to telework to support on-site staff and virtual services.

Phase 3: Limited Public Access to Facilities
With further relaxation of SIP, on-site staffing levels can increase, allowing for limited public access to library buildings targeting services that cannot be duplicated in a curbside or virtual environment and are safe to provide in person, while continuing established outside services. Staff and the public will be required to wear face coverings and measures to limit access will involve restricting the number of customers inside by counting and/or observing time limits and limiting operational hours. Dedicated hours for high risk members of the public will be established. Health guards will be installed at service desks and public computers and self-checkout machines will be spaced for social distancing and cleaned

between uses. All virtual services will continue and telework will allow us to support staff on-site and enable robust, personalized support of our library users while minimizing in-person interactions.

Phase 4: New Normal
Following guidelines and recommendations from County Health officials, we will return to operational hours, increasing the number of customers in the buildings and allowing them to stay for a longer length of time. In person staffing increases and telework continues to support and enhance library services. Successful virtual programs and services will continue to expand, while programs slowly resume in our facilities.

We anticipate the need to move between phases in both directions, and will initiate each phase only when we have safety procedures in place, and appropriate supplies to limit risk and safeguard the health and wellbeing of our staff and library users. County Health's Social Distancing Protocol required for all businesses will inform our preparation for each phase, enhanced by additional measures designed to meet the unique characteristics of public libraries, staff, and customers.

San Mateo County Libraries have a strong commitment to prioritizing the safety and wellness of staff, while also maximizing access to resources and providing the highest levels of community service. This phased reopening plan enables the flexibility needed for San Mateo County Libraries to achieve these goals which address the specific needs of our local communities in light of the challenging and changing realities of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact in accepting this report. Once plans and supply costs are finalized staff will return to the JPA Governing Board to request additional funds if it exceeds budgeted amounts.

Recommendation

Recommend Library JPA Operations Committee accept the COVID-19 Phased Reopening Plan and provide input and direction to staff on implementation.