San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item VII.

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To: JPA Governing Board

From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services

Carine Risley, Deputy Director of Library Services

Date: November 10, 2021

Meeting: November 15, 2021

Re: Operations Update and Recommended Service Hours

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## Background

To help mitigate the spread of the coronavirus in our community, the Governing Board made the difficult decision to close our libraries starting on March 16, 2020. On May 18, 2020, the Governing Board approved the Library's four-phase COVID-19 Reopening Plan.

We are currently in Phase 4 of our Reopening Plan, New Normal. All libraries (with the exception of Pacifica) are open six days a week with a consistent schedule of Mondays and Tuesdays 10am-8pm and Wednesdays through Saturdays 10am-5pm. Pacifica's two libraries have adjusted hours that include Sharp Park Library: Mondays 10-8pm, Tuesdays 12-8pm, Thursdays and Fridays 10-5pm, and Saturdays 1-5pm; and Sanchez Library: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays 1-5pm.

As a youth setting our libraries never discontinued mask requirements, but all library spaces are open and available for use. We have not reached pre-covid visitor counts or circulation numbers at any location, nor encountered any significant challenges.

This summer, as Library Explorer and Inspiring Summer camps ended, the percentage of individuals vaccinated steadily rose, the number of COVID-19 transmissions slowed, and the risks from COVID-19 were reduced, we were poised to expand services. While we adjusted plans in response to the Delta surge, we have been able to move forward by initially emphasizing outdoor programming and a measured, incremental approach to program restoration.

## Discussion

<u>Operations Update</u>

With the start of the school year, we began offering in-person, relevant, and engaging activities for all ages.

- Adult literacy tutoring has resumed indoors to meet the critical learning needs of those unable to meet virtually or who learn best in person. Learners are working on real-life

goals like getting a better job, helping their children with homework, or reading a book on their own. Despite the challenges of remote tutoring, 60%-80% of learners have either met or made progress towards these goals in the last year. We're pleased to be bringing back this service to our library spaces and recently recruited over 30 new volunteers to serve as literacy tutors.

- Outdoor story times offer families a much-needed avenue to learn, develop, and practice literacy skills in a fun and safe social setting. An exciting mix of toddler, preschool, family, musical, Spanish, and Chinese story times are offered each week at our libraries and local community parks. Our communities have been grateful to experience in-person programs back at the library, a sentiment expressed by all families who have participated thus far. Attendance has grown rapidly with some events including over 80 participants.

- In-person outdoor STEAM-focused afterschool programming engages 2nd-5th graders by introducing and reinforcing science, technology, engineering, art, and math skills. The STEAM Team and Take and Make activities are modeled after our Inspiring Summers and STEAM kits curricula and offer hands-on fun and educational concepts for youth to enjoy.

- Staff are also rebuilding social connections by offering passive afterschool programming to tweens and teens at the library once again.

Whether it is receiving an email from a Labor Market Information workshop attendee saying they can't make the How to Get a State Job class because they've gotten an interview, to an Author Talks participant sharing they were honored to be in the audience and they just want more events to attend, it is clear the impact of these programs have been profound. Recent participant feedback has included:

- Thanks "for offering a broad range of events & topics!"
- Expressions of gratitude "for all the programs being offered currently."
- "This library has the best classes. Such a great resource especially being able to do them virtually."

Our in-person programs have all been conducted safely with no incidents to note. For the remainder of 2021 staff will be engaged in increasing the number and type of programs offered to our community members virtually and in-person, outside as well as indoors.

Program attendees and visitors to our spaces will be required to continue to wear face coverings, unless exempt, until a COVID-19 vaccine is widely available to children and sufficient time has elapsed to confer full protection of the vaccine. All current services and future programming and events will be carefully monitored, and we will continue to revisit and iterate as appropriate.

Recommended Increase in Service Hours

We are looking forward to returning to pre-pandemic hours in January, if risks continue to remain low and the percentage of residents vaccinated continues to increase with the rollout of the vaccine for children ages 5 through 11.

In accordance with the Library JPA Agreement, Section E. Minimum Service Levels, "*For Parties of less than 6,500 in population, base library service shall be 40 hours per week and for Parties of over 6,500 in population, base library service shall be 60 hours per week. Each Party may supplement revenues to provide for enhanced services at individual library facilities, but no Party shall be required to make a revenue contribution for additional services beyond the minimum service levels provided for in this agreement*."

To better serve our communities, we are recommending the continuation of consistent library schedules at all locations to invite our community members back to our libraries with an easy-to-remember, inclusive schedule. Staff recommends a new weekly schedule that restores additional evening and weekend hours.

All libraries with a population over 6,500 would be open Monday-Thursday 10-8 and Friday-Sunday 10-5, or a total of 61 hours per week. The estimated cost for one extra hour of service per week for these libraries in the current budget year is $28,000. Due to Pacifica's unique situation of having two library branches, staff will need to work directly with Pacifica City staff to determine how to split service hours between the Sharp Park Library and the Sanchez Library.

Libraries in communities with a population less than 6,500 include Brisbane, Portola Valley and Woodside. On September 20, 2021, the board approved the Town of Woodside's request to utilize restricted County Free Library property taxes to support 60 hours of service and the Town of Portola Valley's request to remain at 48 hours of service. The amount of excess library property tax currently restricted for these communities is adequate to cover the estimated increase in annual costs.

To provide consistent library services system-wide, staff is recommending a pilot to increase hours at Brisbane. The City of Brisbane has a population of 4,697 and has supported three additional library hours for many years. The successful opening and popularity of the new library with our second maker space gives us a new opportunity to assess community demand and use. An increase of 18 hours a week for the second half of the fiscal year has an estimated cost of $63,000.

At the November 9, 2021 Operations Committee, members approved the recommendation and discussed extending the pilot to include additional hours for Pacifica libraries. Pacifica has the highest population in the system at 38,130, and work toward constructing a new library to meet the community's need is ongoing. Pre-COVID, the City and Library were actively pursuing a two-branch strategy, a new large main library at the Sharp Park location and a small branch library at the Sanchez location that will host a library vending machine later this fiscal year, and be operated in

partnership with the City's Parks, Beaches and Recreation Department. Operations Committee members unanimously approved a motion to extend the pilot program to increase operational hours at Pacifica Sharp Park while keeping minimal hours at the Pacifica Sanchez Library. The approximate increase for the second half of the fiscal year has an estimated cost of $59,500.

There are sufficient existing funds in the FY 2021-22 Adopted Budget to accommodate the proposed temporary increase in service hours. Since the additional hours would begin no sooner than January 2022, the increase in costs would only be realized for half of the fiscal year or an estimated $150,500. Staff will work to evaluate and assess new service hour schedules and whether any budgetary increases should be recommended for the FY 2022-23 Recommended Budget to maintain hours.

## Fiscal Impact

The costs associated with expanding hours to a consistent and equitable level at all locations would total an estimated $150,500. The Library has adequate revenue to support these costs in the current FY 2021-22 Recommended Budget.

## Recommendation

Recommend JPA Governing Board accept the operations report and approve the recommendation to restore pre-pandemic hours, and an expansion of hours pilot when safe to do so in the second half of the fiscal year. Operations Committee members present at the November 9, 2021 meeting concurred with this recommendation.