San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item V.

To: JPA Operations Committee

From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services

Date: June 7, 2022

Meeting: June 13, 2022

Re: Director's Report

This report summarizes significant library operations and program activities that have occurred since the last meeting of the Operations Committee. Services and activities are aligned with our Strategic Plan Goals.

We understand community needs and promote meaningful library services as solutions.

Bike Anywhere

San Mateo County Libraries celebrated Bike to Your Library Weekend (Friday, May 20 - Sunday, May 22) by expanding our Book-A-Bike Service to all library locations. Bikes may be checked out for one week for environmentally friendly travel and include a lock and safety equipment.

In addition, we offered bicycle safety inspection clinics and bicycle basics workshops, hosted an energizer station during Bay Area Bike to Work Day and offered bicycle giveaway bags in partnership with Commute.org and the Silicon Valley Bike Coalition. More than 150 cycling enthusiasts came to our libraries to take advantage of the free bicycle safety inspections and learn best practices for owning and riding their bikes.

Mental Health Awareness Month

Each day that passes brings a deeper understanding of the mental health crisis affecting our communities. In May, in honor of Mental Health Awareness, we launched a Mental Health Resources webpage to provide our communities year-round easy access to books, digital resources, upcoming events and more related to mental health. We also augmented our year-round wellness programming to shine a spotlight on taking care of yourself, asking for help when you need it, and destigmatizing mental health issues.

Online options included a three-part Taking Time to Meditate workshop series to slow down and get grounded; certified instructor-led Chair Yoga to explore the mind-body connection; Be Brave, Be Sensitive, a culturally sensitive and resilience-building workshop on helping friends and loved ones experiencing mental distress; and Take a Break from Stress with Meditation led by Gaurav Singh to meet our daily challenges with greater vitality. Our attendees have shared that they "absolutely love" these practices and are thankful to have them available.

Accessible community events at many of our libraries included micro-meditations highlighting the free library resource Calm; Meditation: A Tool to Balance Your Life to foster greater physical, emotional and spiritual well-being; Meditation with Shiraz Jack focused on chanting and breathing; Tai Chi classes introducing several styles of healing through the body; and mindfulness with Chinese Calligraphy to support self-expression and mental healing through the arts. We concluded the month's activities by screening the film Angst followed by a Q&A on May 28th at San Carlos Library. The documentary is designed to raise awareness around anxiety and provides tools, resources, and above all, hope.

We are leaders in establishing a foundation for early literacy and supporting exploration and growth at every stage of life.

Summer Learning Challenge

Our annual Summer Learning Challenge is here! During June 1 through August 31, all ages are encouraged to read (or listen to) books, attend library events and try new activities at home for the chance to win fun prizes. All youth card holders who check out at least one item during this period will automatically be entered into a raffle to win a $1000 scholarship, a family membership to CuriOdyssey, or a San Mateo County Parks Pass.

In addition to offering free books to help kids complete this year's Summer Learning Challenge, each library will have plenty of fun events and performances for all ages featuring multicultural celebrations, animal shows, musical shows and our reimagined Library Explorers programs— based on our popular summer 2021 camps but scaled down so kids can enjoy these "bite-sized" experiences without having to register.

Empower Cards

Empower Cards are designed to simplify and expand student access to library resources. Powered by San Mateo County Libraries and Redwood City Public Library, the new library card launch was announced in March and we're steadily making progress towards our goal of issuing access to all 62,202 students in our school districts by the end of 2022.

So far, we have issued 10,357 Empower Cards to youth enrolled at Brisbane School District, San Carlos School District, San Mateo-Foster City School District, Cabrillo Unified School District, Pescadero La Honda Union School District, and Redwood City School District. By the end of this school year, we also expect to issue cards to all Ravenswood School District students.

By working with the districts to provide cards to all, we eliminate barriers and equitably engage many new card holders with our expansive educational and recreational resources.

Makermobile

The Makermobile will arrive in San Mateo County this summer! Phoenix Motorcars has started the electrification of the truck's chassis, converting it into a zero emission, all electric Makermobile - the first for San Mateo County Libraries.

The Makermobile will ensure our innovative, high-quality learning experiences are delivered beyond our library buildings and will be accessible to all ages and inclusive, particularly to people who are not familiar with the maker movement and maker activities. Equipment will include a Glowforge Pro laser cutter, laptops, iPads, a 3D printer and more. A diverse array of maker activities will be available to encourage making, ignite a growth mindset through trial-and-error, create transformative experiences, and teach timeless skills like problem solving, critical thinking, design thinking, creativity, and curiosity.

Pilot Electric Vehicle Charging Station

We are excited to be working with the County's Office of Sustainability (OOS) and their Zero Emission Vehicle effort to pilot and evaluate the need for new charging stations throughout the County. OOS has selected our Library Administration building as a pilot site and will be purchasing and installing a Beam EV ARC™ solar electric vehicle charging system this summer. The Beam charging systems fit in a standard parking space and are equipped with a dual port charger. Each EV system generates and stores its own clean electricity and delivers that electricity to power vehicles day or night, and during inclement weather and power outages.

Equity Through Art: Filipinx Kwentuhan

Every culture has a storytelling tradition. In the Filipinx diaspora, kwentuhan (storytelling) is a way of remembering and honoring ancestors, preserving histories and reconnecting with kapwa. On Thursday, March 31 we hosted, Equity Through Art: Filipinx Kwentuhan, moderated by Aileen Cassinetto, San Mateo County Poet Laureate. The online event featured unique stories of resilience, healing and bayanihan in the Filipinx community in San Mateo County. A recording of this event as well as others from our 2021-2022 Equity Through Art series can be found here.

Intellectual Freedom

We believe in the rights of all people to freely read books to form their own opinions and perspectives. Our recent blog, "Support Intellectual Freedom: Read Banned Books" discusses the recent increase in book challenges and our role in supporting intellectual freedom. We are proud to make a collection of commonly banned books available with (or without) a library card through our SimplyE platform. Those who are denied their right to read are welcome to access a broader, uncensored collection of ideas with San Mateo County Libraries.

We cultivate an active presence and create spaces that support discovery, enrich lives, and uplift the community.

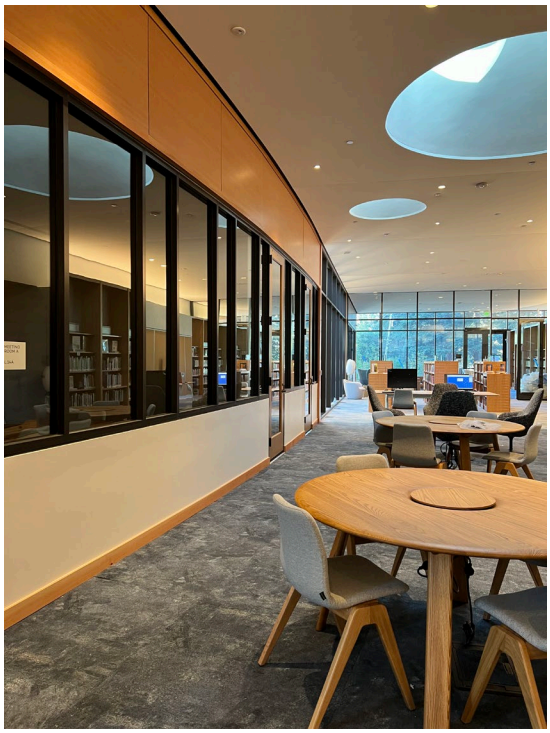
Atherton Library Grand Opening

We were thrilled to welcome the community to the new Atherton Library on Saturday, June 4! Attendees enjoyed refreshments on the new library's front porch and listened to live music before heading inside for storytime, book browsing, demos in the makerspace and digital lab, and more. Architecture tours shared insights about the building and its sustainable features.

Hundreds joined to hear from Mayor Rick DeGolia, Library JPA Chair Reuben Holober, Friends Board member Joan Sanders and special guest Congresswoman Anna Eshoo before children broke through the banner and opened the Library for the first time.

"The library's flexible and inviting space is something the entire community has been looking forward to for years," said Atherton Mayor Rick DeGolia. "With its many new, up-to-date amenities and impressive tech offerings including a large indoor-outdoor makerspace and a state-of-the-art computer training room, the library offers a place for new experiences. I am excited to see our residents come together here to learn and create."

After more than three years of construction, the much-anticipated new 10,200 square-foot library facility and restored 1,800 square-foot Historic Town Hall opened for a day of discovery and exploration. Set on the wooded site of Atherton's newly built Town Center, the beautiful new library includes flexible, blended, multi-use spaces which can be readily adapted for community needs.



Exciting library features include:

- A large and welcoming front porch that encourages community connections and conversations under the canopy of the majestic oak trees.
- A quiet reading room that leads out to the library's back porch for visitors to read and reflect in solitude.
- Flexible and expanded spaces and collections to support all ages and interest levels.
- A makerspace and digital lab with 3D printers, a high-performance laser cutter, GoPro camera kits and a deck for makers to find inspiration outdoors.
- Tech offerings including laptops and WiFi hotspots available for checkout, plus computers and printers onsite.
- Multiple meeting rooms including the renovated Historic Town Hall celebrating Atherton's unique history and new Willie Mays room, named in honor of the Hall of Famer, a beloved Atherton resident and legendary San Francisco Giant.

Article at: Atherton Library to celebrate grand opening, The Almanac, May 27, 2022

Our First Digital Lab

The Atherton Library is our first library to include a digital lab space— the Digital Lab makes innovative software and hardware accessible and designed for patron centered creation, community interaction, and collaboration. Patrons can use next-level software to capture and transform their imaginative ideas into blueprints that can be built or fabricated next door in the makerspace.

Digital Lab equipment includes laptops outfitted with Adobe CS Cloud and AutoCAD, advanced software usually used by professional designers, architects, and engineers. Adobe CS Cloud includes Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere and In Design programs, allowing for creativity in graphic design, video editing, web development, and photography.

The lab also offers our more traditional equipment and programming such as robotics. Adults and children alike will enjoy makerspace programming which will feature new high-quality equipment –in addition to our standard makerspace equipment such as Virtual Reality devices, DSLR Cameras, and 3D printers.

This vibrant space was swirling with ideas generated between an enthusiastic community of makers iterating and collaborating to improve their craft. New makers will be able to select from the variety of instructional programming the Library will offer, and they will use the tools, teaching resources, and guidance of more experienced makers to find inspiration. Our vision is for seasoned makers to have the opportunity to share their knowledge and skill with their fellow community and perhaps gain a new perspective from a budding maker. Overall, we hope patrons will feel enlightened and empowered by their own learning experiences and energized to create alongside library staff and a community of makers.

Makerspaces

We continue to make progress on our Makerspace Master Plan and are working with our city partners to have new makerspaces available to the communities of Foster City and Millbrae by the beginning of next year. Picking up where we left off pre-pandemic, staff has been working closely with the City of Millbrae, the City of Foster City and architects to finalize makerspace plans, update cost estimates and funding. In the coming months we will finalize the construction documents for approval, permitting and bidding. We are very excited about our partnership with our cities and the Friends of the Library to cultivate communities of makers in our libraries.

North Fair Oaks People Projects

North Fair Oaks Library was included in Redwood City's pilot participatory budgeting process, The People's Budget. Community members could directly decide how to spend part of the city budget by voting in Spanish and English through May 9. Initiatives that directly affect the library include a teen jobs program to support tutoring, fix-it clinics to help community members repair their household items, free SAT prep classes, and improved signage and pedestrian pathways near the facility.

Building Forward State Infrastructure Grants

The Budget Act of 2021 (SB 129) allocated $439 million in one-time funds to the California State Library to address life-safety and critical maintenance needs of public library facilities throughout California. This competitive grant program, which represents the largest investment in California public libraries in a generation, prioritizes funding for local library facilities located in high poverty areas of the state. Library staff collaborated with our partners in East Palo Alto, Pacifica and San Mateo County to submit applications for funding for four library projects: the new Sharp Park Library, remodeled Sanchez Library, new East Palo Alto Library and remodeled North Fair Oaks Library. Grantees will be required to provide matching funds on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

The first round of applications closed on March 21, 2022. The California State Library received a total of 298 applications and is currently reviewing them to make notifications of awards in this Summer. Further rounds are possible based on available funding.

Library Personnel News

Two employees are being honored by the County for their completed years of service: Pamela Bilz, Community Program Specialist (20 years) and Priscilla Bermudez, Administrative Assistant (10 years). Congratulations to Pamela and Priscilla on their many years of service and numerous contributions to San Mateo County Libraries!

State Trailer Bill Impact to Excess ERAF

In May, we received updated fiscal impact projections from the County Controller for the California Department of Finance's amended Budget Trailer Bill language regarding the In-lieu Vehicle License Fee (VLF) shortfall. This new language caps the Excess ERAF amounts for cities and counties at FY 2021-22 levels, with any future growth diverted to pay for the State's VLF obligation. In their initial interpretation of the Budget Trailer Bill, the County Controller projects that, if passed, the amount of excess ERAF special districts would otherwise receive would be entirely diverted to pay for the VLF obligation.

In the County Controller's initial fiscal impact projections, San Mateo County Libraries was treated as a special district and is therefore not projected to receive any Excess ERAF over the next decade if the Budget Trailer Bill passes and the County Controller's interpretation of the bill remains unchanged. This would amount to an annual loss of $6.8 million moving forward, which was the Excess ERAF amount we received in FY 2021-22.

The FY 2022-23 Recommended Budget does not rely on Excess ERAF for any ongoing expenditures. However, Excess ERAF is utilized for one-time expenses and is budgeted at $5 million. Current communications from the County indicate that the Trailer Bill will likely be rejected however, if the bill passes and the County Controller's fiscal impact projections for the Library JPA remained unchanged, updates to the budget will be brought to the JPA Operations Committee and Governing Board for approval during FY 2022-23 September Revisions.

Library staff worked with Chair Holober to provide the attached letter of opposition to the Senate and Assembly Budget Subcommittee #4 on State Administration tasked with reviewing and acting on this issue. We should know in the coming weeks whether the Budget Trailer Bill has passed.

Staff are engaged in discussions with the County Controller, Library JPA Attorney, and California Special Districts Associations (CSDA) on this issue. CSDA disagrees with the County Controller's reading and application of the Budget Trailer Bill and does not believe the State intends to harm special districts in this way. We will continue to keep the Library JPA Governing Board and Operations Committee apprised of any developments impacting San Mateo County Libraries.

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San Mateo County Libraries

May 19, 2022
(via Email)

The Honorable Sydney Kamlager
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #4 on State Administration and General Government
1021 O Street, Suite 6510
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Wendy Carrillo
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #4 on State Administration
1021 O Street, Suite 5730
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: May Revise – Excess ERAF Trailer Bill Language-- OPPOSE

Dear Chair Kamlager & Chair Carrillo:

On behalf of San Mateo County Library Joint Powers Authority, I write to convey our opposition to a revised proposed trailer bill released in connection with the May Budget Revision currently titled "Act to Amend Section 97.70 of Revenue and Taxation Code relating to taxation and making an appropriation therefor." This proposed trailer bill (like a previous, unacceptable version) would change current law in a way that would significantly harm counties and cities by permanently "capping" the ERAF funds that would be returned to them (after schools have been fully funded) and, instead, use such local tax revenues to pay the State's in-lieu Vehicle License Fee (VLF) obligation.

Our County Controller has notified us that, if enacted, it is projected that special districts, including San Mateo County Libraries (Libraries), will no longer receive any excess ERAF dollars. This proposal would cause significant immediate and future financial losses to the local agencies' revenues and require reductions in critical public services so that the State can offload its VLF obligation onto the local agencies themselves. This bill will ultimately result in San Mateo County and its cities losing hundreds of millions of dollars every year, funds that are already budgeted by many municipalities for important local services.

As we have noted previously, the VLF "Swap" was an integral part of the 2004 Budget compromise under which counties and cities gave up significant revenue to address the State's budget deficit. The VLF Swap legislation identified two direct sources of funding to pay the State's in-lieu VLF obligation to counties and cities: (a) ERAF distributions to non-basic aid schools; and (b) property tax revenues of non-basic aid schools. While the statute identifies these two funding sources, the State effectively pays the VLF obligation to local agencies because it backfills the non-basic aid school districts for these amounts so school districts do not suffer any financial loss from the in-lieu VLF obligation.

The VLF Swap law, which codified this compromise and remains in effect, explicitly provides that counties and cities' excess ERAF monies are not available to pay the State's VLF obligation. When this compromise was reached, neither local agencies nor the Legislature anticipated that the two funding sources to pay the State's in-lieu VLF obligation would ever be insufficient to do so. In recent years, however, VLF revenue shortfalls have occurred and, as a result, cities and counties have been required to make special appropriation requests to receive their full amount of VLF in arrears.

The State is now proposing to address this shortfall by taking local agencies' own funds to pay for the State's VLF obligation. Specifically, this bill would amend Revenue & Taxation Code § 97.70(f)(1) to reverse the current statutory restriction on using local agencies' excess ERAF and instead permanently cap it so that future growth can be used to fund the State's VLF obligation. This fundamental change will harm local agencies by tens of millions of dollars growing to hundreds of millions, as the State's share of the VLF shortfall shrinks. Under this proposal, local capped excess ERAF will decline in value while the State absorbs all of the growth to offset its statutory VLF obligation. The trailer bill would also violate constitutional provisions approved by the voters, including as Proposition 1A and 22, that prohibit the State from raiding local agency funds to pay for its responsibilities. Indeed, the act would penalize local agencies that seek to vindicate their constitutional rights

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by including a provision to immediately terminate State funding for shortfalls if its cap on excess ERAF is invalidated in Court.

In our service area, returned ERAF monies fund investments in technology and other significant projects that provide vital library resources and services to our communities and comprise approximately 14% percent of our Total Revenue. The loss of this funding will have a devastating impact on our library system's budget and ability to continue providing needed local services.

Capping this funding and allocating any growth to instead pay the State's VLF obligation effectively cements the VLF shortfall—now transformed under the trailer bill into an excess ERAF shortfall—as a permanent loss in local revenues that will have a devastating impact on our budget and ability to continue providing these needed local services. Under this proposal, our County Controller projects the Libraries will no longer receive excess ERAF dollars, which the State will absorb to fund its own statutory obligation to make VLF payments.

As such, we urge you to reject this trailer bill language so that none of its amendments to Revenue and Taxation Code § 97.70 are enacted into law.

In sum, the San Mateo County Library Joint Powers Authority strongly opposes the proposed trailer bill offered in the May Revise. The trailer bill reneges on commitments that the State previously enacted into law regarding the source of VLF funding, violates State constitutional provisions that prohibit such raids of local funds and the 2004 budget compromise between the State and local agencies. The State must fund its VLF obligation without diverting hundreds of millions of dollars from local agencies' budgets, requiring cuts and further constraining their ability to deliver critical public safety and health services to their communities.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Reuben Holober
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Reuben Holober, Governing Board Chair
San Mateo County Library Joint Powers Authority

CC: Senator Josh Becker Senator Scott Weiner
Assembly Member Kevin Mullin
Assembly Member Marc Berman
Assembly Member Phil Ting
San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
San Mateo County, County Executive Mike Callagy