



City of Homer

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Homer Public Library

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Memorandum

TO: Library Advisory Board

THROUGH: Renee Krause, City Clerk

FROM: Ann Dixon, Library Director

DATE: October 5, 2015

SUBJECT: Impact of "Bare Bones Budget" Cuts to Library Services – Budget B

Library staff understands the seriousness of the fiscal gap crisis. Every department must do its part to cut costs while maintaining services as best we can.

That said, it must be understood that budget cuts will have serious consequences for library services. The budget has been pared to the point that only core resources and services remain. Staff is already working at capacity, having streamlined numerous workflows over the past several years.

The Collection

Cutting the budget for books and other media at these levels will:

- Severely decrease the number of new books, DVDs, and audiobooks we can purchase.
- Result in longer waits for new books and media.
- Result in less variety of materials for all ages.
- Reduces our ability to replace out-of-date and worn-out materials.
- Increases our reliance on interlibrary loan to obtain materials from other libraries, which takes longer for the patron, is costly in postage and is time-consuming for staff.
- Reduces and in some cases eliminate funding for periodicals, electronic media and databases currently used by many patrons for research, recreational reading, business and current affairs.

Cutting the budget for books, in particular, will halt our on-going project to improve the Library's collection.

- The library collection is still recovering from several decades of underfunding for new materials, as documented by the Library Advisory Board in 2012.

- In 2011 the average publication date of HPL's nonfiction books was 1989. Thanks to two Rasmuson grants and improved funding for materials from the City of Homer, that average pub date has risen to 1996 in 2015. Our goal is to bring the collection into the 21st century by replacing out-of-date, unused, and worn-out books. Decreased budgets for materials will take us backwards in that effort.

Staffing

Eliminating positions will reduce hours the library is open. These reduced open hours will negatively impact most library users.

We are currently open 52 hours (six days) per week. 40 open hours per week is the bare minimum to qualify for the annual Public Library Assistance Grant.

Reduction in hours the Library is open will:

- Especially impact children, adults who work during the week, tutors and their students, and availability of rooms for community meetings.
- Result in less access for patrons to computers to conduct business, personal communications, research, legal, medical and other affairs online.
- Result in longer wait periods for new materials by patrons.
- Reduce our availability to visitors during the tourist season.

Reducing staffing will impair staff's ability to handle day-to-day workloads at a time when library use is increasing.

- Fewer hours per week shelving materials.
- Fewer hours per week processing new materials.
- Less mending of damaged materials.
- Fewer hours per week of front-line staffing at the circulation desk.
- Fewer hours of core library tasks by staff who will need to assist patrons at the circulation desk those additional hours (cataloging, ordering and processing new materials, mending materials, maintaining and updating the website, maintaining and updating library software, tracking periodicals, interlibrary loans, database maintenance, processing overdue notices, scheduling, receiving and sending mail, and supervising volunteers).
- Move experienced, highly trained, and higher-paid technical staff from their work in specialized tasks to more generalized work on the front desk that could be handled by lower-grade employees.
- Increase workload for staff during remaining open hours, including the busy summer season.
- Increase staff burnout.

- Loss of investment in training the staff member who is laid off.

Programming

Reducing staff will curtail our ability to plan and implement literacy, educational, and cultural programs for youth and adults.

- Reduce story times offered (resulting in crowds of 50 or more at story times).
- Fewer after-school and Saturday children's programs during the school year.
- Fewer summer story times and summer reading program activities.
- Less outreach to schools, childcare facilities, and the homebound.
- May reduce frequency of homebound/senior service (currently weekly).

Other

- Impair and/or halt staff's ability to continue collection management projects currently underway (database clean-up, fiction section re-labeling, reorganization of children's books).
- Reduce staff's ability to collaborate with other community groups (recent examples: Homer Early Childhood Coalition, MAPP, Hospice of Homer, Pratt Museum).
- Reduce staff's ability to assist with City projects as they arise (recent examples: social media policies, website, wellness committee).
- Reduce staff's ability to find time for grant writing.

It is well documented that when economies contract, people utilize public libraries more than ever.

<http://chicago.cbslocal.com/top-lists/celebrate-womens-history-month/public-library-use-goes-up-as-economic-crisis-intensifies/>

<http://www.toledoblade.com/frontpage/2008/09/01/In-economic-downturn-patrons-discover-library-services-pay-off.html>

http://www.lrs.org/documents/closer_look/Recession_2011_Closer_Look_Report.pdf

<http://www.library.arkansas.gov/PublicLibraryServices/Documents/recession.pdf>