



City of Homer

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Homer Public Library

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Memorandum 20-106

TO: Homer City Council

THROUGH: Acting City Manager Rick Abboud

FROM: David Berry, Library Director

DATE: July 10, 2020

SUBJECT: Fine-Free Library Service

Over the last several years, hundreds of public libraries across the nation have chosen to abolish library fines. Eliminating fines offers a number of benefits to the library and the community:

- Increased circulation
- Reduced inequality between rich and poor
- Equalized rates between print and digital resources
- Improved literacy
- Reduced staff workload
- Improved public relations

Staff at Homer Public Library have discussed this subject a number of times, and are unanimous in recommending that HPL should follow the lead of other systems, including public libraries in Anchorage, Chicago, Denver, Salt Lake City, San Francisco and St. Paul. At a time when many patrons are struggling financially, eliminating fines is a cheap and easy way to boost morale, promote learning and strengthen the community.

At the Library Advisory Board meeting on July 7, 2020, staff presented four alternative models for fine-free or fine-reduced service:

- Option A simply eliminates all library fines. This offers the greatest benefit to the community at the greatest expense, with an annual cost in the range of \$15,500.
- Option B eliminates all fines but partially offsets the cost by raising fees for photocopying, printing and processing of replacement materials. Estimated annual cost is around \$7,500.
- Option C eliminates fines only for children's and young adult materials. Estimated annual cost is around \$7,500.
- Option D offers a one-time amnesty on existing fines without changing the overall structure. This is the cheapest option, but benefits only a subset of all patrons, and only for a limited time.

After discussion, the LAB unanimously voted to endorse **Option A with an increase in the processing fee for replacement materials.** Raising the processing fee helps recover costs and encourages patrons to exercise personal responsibility for protecting and returning their materials.

The modified version of Option A is attached as **Option E.**

RECOMMENDATION

Following the LAB's recommendation, adopt Option E as the library's official fine-and-fee-policy going forward.