



REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Title: Library Fines

Preferred Agenda: October 26, 2021

Submitted By: Megan Dazey, Library Services Director

Reviewed By: Name, Title

Type of Action: Resolution ____ Motion x____ Roll Call ____ Other ____

Relevant Code/Policy: City Fee Schedule 2021

Towards Council Goal: Goal #2 Be an Effective and Efficient Government; Goal #5 Image Building

Attachments:

Purpose of this RCA:

To remove barriers to access of library materials for all Sweet Home Library cardholders for the Holiday season (Nov. 1-Jan. 31), we are asking the City Council to eliminate fines on library materials for three months as a trial period, as approved by the Library Advisory Board.

Background/Context:

The threat of accumulating fines for late library materials can keep low-income families away from libraries or from checking out materials to take home. These fines can negatively affect the borrowing habits of members of the community that need the library the most. Removing barriers or perceived barriers to access of library materials can increase visits to the library and the circulation of materials. Many libraries have noted a dramatic increase in the number of items returned to the library after fines were eliminated. Libraries can also generate positive publicity and increased usage from all city residents by going fine free.

Library cards at the Sweet Home Public Library are good for 1 year and can be renewed annually. However, to renew the library card, all fines and fees must be paid for prior to renewal. Charges for lost materials will still occur if the item is not brought back to the library within 30 days of being due.

The Challenge/Problem:

Eliminate barriers to access of library materials in the library and in the home.

Stakeholders:

- City of Sweet Home Library Residents – Residents pay property taxes for the library through a levy. The library works with the money they invest to operate the public library.
- Sweet Home City Council Members – Council members are the voice of the citizens they serve and represent.

- Library Advisory Board– Appointed members of the community whose role is to make recommendations to the City Council about rules and policies for the efficient and effective operation of the library.
- Sweet Home Public Library card holders- Members of the community that use and wish to continue to use the library collections at the library and in their homes.
- Sweet Home Public Library staff- Library staff interact with library users daily and provide excellent customer service.

Issues and Financial Impacts:

The Library Advisory Board believes the financial impact will be minimal to the library’s budget, but the impact on the community and those that can least afford to pay the fines will be large. September-October the average per month for fines paid was \$60.

Elements of a Stable Solution:

The ideal outcome will be a three-month trial period to work towards addressing economic disparities in the community when it comes to access to library materials and to remove barriers to access of information.

Options:

1. Do Nothing – Leaves fines as is on all library materials; library staff continue to collect fines.
2. Eliminate the fines for three months – Library staff will waive all fines on overdue materials for the three-month trial period.
3. Eliminate fines permanently – The computer system will automatically no longer charge fines on library materials, with no intervention from library staff.

Recommendation:

The Library Advisory Board recommends option no. 2. Motion to eliminate fines for three months.