REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Title:	Request for Council Action - Resolution No. 6 for 2022, Library Fine Removal
Preferred Agenda:	February 22,2022
Submitted By:	Megan Dazey, Library Services Director
Reviewed By:	Blair Larsen, City Manager Pro Tem
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:	Resolution No. 6 for 2022

Purpose of this RCA:

To remove barriers to access of library materials for all Sweet Home Library cardholders we are asking the City Council to permanently eliminate fines on library materials, 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.

During our 3-month trial period, staff saw a 79% decrease in long overdue items year over year. This saves staff a few hours every week of calling patrons. Staff are spending 3-4 hours per month less on accounting duties. Staff savings alone far exceed the $60 average fines were bringing in each month.

Charges for lost materials will still occur if an item is not brought back to the library within 30 days of being due.

The Challenge/Problem:

How does the City eliminate barriers to the 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 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 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, as well as direct limited staff time to other projects and duties.

Options:

1. *Do Nothing* – Return to placing fines on all library materials and library staff again collect fines.
2. *Motion to adopt Resolution No. 6 for 2022 as presented, which eliminates library fines permanently* – The computer system will automatically no longer charge fines on library materials, with no intervention from library staff.
3. *Motion to adopt Resolution No. 6 for 2022, amended to eliminate library fines only for an additional three months* – Fines will continue to be waived for materials for another three-month trial period.

Recommendation:

The Library Advisory Board recommends option 2, *Motion to adopt Resolution No. 6 for 2022 as presented, which eliminates library fines permanently*.