



LIBRARY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20220725-6: Support for Austin Public Library Proposed Budget for FY23

Date: July 25, 2022

Subject: Support for Austin Public Library Proposed Budget for FY23

Motioned By:

Seconded By:

Recommendation

Support for Austin Public Library Proposed Budget for FY23

Description of Recommendation to Council

Requesting that the Austin City Council approve the proposed Austin Public Library FY23 budget request, including increases to purchase new library materials and for salary adjustments to ensure recruitment and retention of library staff.

Rationale:

“Libraries are a cornerstone of democracy—where information is free and equally available to everyone. People tend to take that for granted, and they don’t realize what is at stake when that is put at risk.”

— **Carla Hayden, 14th Librarian of Congress**

Following the COVID-19 pandemic related shutdowns, APL rebounded to move toward full service for the citizens of Austin by providing access to physical facilities and collections as well as ongoing online access to digital materials. APL continues to provide innovative programming. In the past year, July 2021 – June 2022, APL hosted 680 in-person programs and 264 live virtual programs with 24,676 attendees. 2022’s APL Virtual Summer Reading Program *Austin Completely Booked* has seen readers of all ages log over 800,000 minutes of reading since the program started in June.

In an effort to address the ongoing digital divide, the APL continues to offer a widespread device loan program in partnership with community organizations and area school districts. APL also has a new grant initiative to support digital inclusion awarded by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission / Institute of Museum and Library Service / American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The grant includes digital navigators and telehealth services and support. The focus and purpose of the grant is for libraries to address digital access and gaps of residents, most impacted by COVID to confidently and meaningfully navigate and access online resources. APL plans to build our capacity and resources to sustain these services at some level over time.

APL also continues to provide staff development training to support the ability of all employees to provide a welcoming, equitable, and safe environment for customers using curbside and remote services.

APL's Organizational Development Office is linking staff with online and in-person training opportunities. Examples include: *APL Hiring Fundamentals*, *Mental Illness: How to Handle Problematic Behavior*, *Introduction to Strategic Planning for Public Libraries*, *Copyright for Librarians*, *Reopening Lives with the Library*, and *Equal Access for Every Ability*.

The proposed budget includes a 2.0% increase to the personnel line to accommodate the citywide increase in entry-level living wage to \$22 per hour. The increase is welcome as it will support efforts to recruit staff for positions that remain unfilled, notably in the area of security guards. Inability to recruit security guards has prevented the library from restoring Sunday service hours.

The proposed budget includes a 3.5% increase in the budget for materials, including digital materials, subscriptions and databases. These increases are necessary to keep up with inflation, the increasing cost of materials, and Austin's population growth.

APL Director Roosevelt Weeks, who is a member of the executive board of The Texas Library Association as Representative-at-Large for Public Libraries, recognizes that libraries face many challenges, including, "navigating in a post COVID-19 environment, racial and social unrest, and changing perception of libraries." He notes that the "library can play an important role in making sure all voices are heard and programs/services are provided in an equitable fashion. We can do this when we work together as one."

The Austin Public Library plays a key role in supporting the City's goals to improve the quality of life through access to services that allow people of all ages to grow and thrive in a supportive and sustainable environment. As the city recovers from the impact of the pandemic, the Library will continue to connect adults, children, families, businesses, and organizations to resources that support education, lifelong learning, personal growth, and economic development.

Vote

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest: