



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: March 1, 2011
To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
From: Nancy Hunt-Coffey, Assistant Director of Community Services
Subject: Request to waive overdue fines as part of National Library Week celebration

Attachments:

INTRODUCTION

For the second year, the City Council is asked to consider waiving overdue fines as part of the Library's celebration of National Library Week. For children, overdue fines would be waived, and for adults, fines would be waived in lieu of a donation of canned goods to the Westside Food Bank. Lost books and processing fees would not be waived as part of this program. While there is some loss in revenues from this type of program, it is anticipated that the Library would be able to recover Library materials which otherwise might never have been returned.

DISCUSSION

April 10-16 is National Library Week this year and the theme is "Create your own story @ your Library." As part of the National Library Week Celebration, the Library seeks Council's permission to waive overdue fines for patrons as it did in 2010. For children, overdue fines would be waived without condition. For adults, canned goods would be accepted in lieu of overdue fines. At a minimum, adult patrons would need to donate one can of food for every \$5 in fines owed. Lost book fees and processing fees for lost books would not be waived as part of this program.

While this type of program will likely result in a loss of some revenues, it has been very successful in many communities for a few reasons. Firstly, patrons are more likely to return overdue library materials if they do not have to pay fines. In many communities, this type of program has resulted in the return of Library materials which are valued at an amount that well exceeds the overdue fines that are waived. Secondly, it is not uncommon for patrons to stop using the Library because they have overdue fines. Thus, overdue fines sometimes impact the segments of our community which need Library service the most, such as children, people who are searching for work or seniors on fixed incomes. This program gives patrons a limited opportunity to have a fresh start with using the Library's collection again, while at the same time collecting needed food supplies for a good cause

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The "Food for Fines" program was very well received by the public in 2010 and brought in approximately 300 cans of food for the West Side Food Bank. The program resulted in \$1650 in fines waived for the one week period. Additionally, while it is difficult to say definitively, it is the sense of staff that a number of library books were returned to the Library which might not otherwise have been recovered.

The Library is suggesting that adult patrons be required to donate canned foods in order to have their fines waived. While this is an unusual provision of this type of program, the hope would be that as the City waives fines to help people reestablish their library privileges, so too would these patrons be helping those who are less fortunate by donating canned food goods to the Westside Food Bank. With the downturn in the economy, the demands on our local food banks are severe. This program would help to address that shortfall.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approximately \$1,700 in fines would be waived during National Library Week. It is estimated that the value of the Library materials that will be returned as part of this program will exceed the loss in overdue fines.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council approves a fine free program as part of National Library Week in April, 2011.


Nancy Hunt-Coffey
Approved By