



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: February 17, 2015
To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
From: Nancy Hunt-Coffey, Assistant Director of Community Services
Subject: Waiving Overdue Library Fines as Part of National Library Week
Attachments: None

INTRODUCTION

For the sixth year, the Library will be 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. All outstanding materials would still be required to be returned as part of this program, however lost books and processing fees would not be waived. While there is some loss in revenues from this type of program, based on past experience it is anticipated that the Library would be able to recover Library materials which otherwise might never have been returned. As this program has been approved by City Council every year for the past 5 years, staff will move forward with implementing the Food for Fines program unless otherwise directed. As a result, this report is for City Council's information.

DISCUSSION

April 12-18 is National Library Week this year, and the theme is "Unlimited Possibilities @ Your Library." As part of the National Library Week Celebration, the Library will waive overdue fines for patrons as it did in 2010-2014. For children, overdue fines would be waived without condition though unreturned items would still be expected to be returned. 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 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. We have found this to be the case in our

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limited experience as well. 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 using the Library's collection again, while at the same time collecting needed food supplies for a good cause.

Since its inception, the "Food for Fines" program has been very well received by the public, bringing in thousands of cans of food for the West Side Food Bank.

The Library is recommending 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. Although the economy is recovering, the demands on our local food banks are still substantial. This program would help to address that shortfall.

FISCAL IMPACT

Based on the program's implementation over recent years, staff anticipates that approximately \$2,000 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

Based on past practice and previous City Council direction, staff will move forward with this program unless otherwise directed. As a result, this item is for City Council's information only.


Nancy Hunt-Coffey
Approved By