



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: November 18, 2008

TO: Andrea Tevlin, Independent Budget Analyst

FROM: Deborah Barrow, Library Director

SUBJECT: Branch Library Operational Considerations in Reducing Hours

Per your request, this is written to describe operational considerations in further reducing branch library hours, which could be an alternative to closing some branch libraries.

In FY 2006, most branch libraries (31 of 35) reduced hours from 48 to 41 hours per week (Monday – Saturday), with 12 remaining open Sundays from 1:00 to 5:00 pm. The Mission Valley Branch Library had its hours reduced from 72 to 41 hours per week. These hours have continued, with three (3) branches open 48 hours, or 8 hours per day, Monday through Saturday. To maximize library services for the public, 41 open hours were spread across six (6) rather than five (5) days, with shorter open hours on Friday and Saturday.

The following operational considerations constrain further reductions in branch library hours:

1. Full-time Staff Schedules. Full-time employees work Monday through Thursday, and alternating Friday and Saturday. This allows 41 open hours over six days of library service per week. Only half of the regular, Full-time staff works on Fridays and Saturdays, with part-time staff employed on these days only to the point to ensure security and adequate public services. Half of all branch employees are part-time (Half-time and Hourly), to more efficiently staff branches on Friday, Saturday and Sundays and to cover absences of essential positions. Through this staffing structure, the Library is also able to avoid overtime costs.
2. Reduce Hours by 10% or to 32 Hours per Week. Most branch libraries (32 of 35) operate 41 hours over six days (Monday through Saturday). Reducing hours by one day per week, or decreasing hours each day, is untenable and inefficient for several reasons:
 - A. Public Confusion if Open Staggered Days. For Full-time staff to work a 40-hour week in libraries that are open only 32 hours per week, libraries would need to be open different days of the week. Then, Full-time staff could complete their 40 hours by working at a different location. Similarly, libraries with less than 8 open hours per day could not be worked by Full-time staff unless these hours coincide with a 40-hour work week, as is accomplished with the current open hours. Public confusion over differing open days, and differing hours per day, would be substantial.

- B. Staff Retention and Costs. The retention of Full-time employees that are offered undesirable schedules, particularly working both weekend days, is expected to be a problem. Retention of part-time staff (Half-time and Hourly) has been a substantial issue for the Library. Staff turnover results in poorer service to the public through loss of experienced staff and results in more costs for hiring and training.
- C. Option of Three-Quarter-Time Staff. Full-time staff could be offered Three-Quarter-time positions (32-hours per week) to address a one-day reduction in service. Reduced benefits would need to be part of union contract negotiations. It is unknown how many staff would be willing to take this option.
- D. Five Percent (5%) Shift Differential. The City's Personnel Regulation H-6 requires that employees be paid an extra 5% of their salary if their schedule does not include two consecutive days of rest. The Library reached agreement with MEA for Full-time employees to have 2 consecutive days off every other week. These employees work Monday through Thursday and Saturday on the alternating week. This means library hours can not be reduced by closing the least busy days of the week, such as Tuesday, Thursday or Friday, without addressing increased employee costs, or going to all part-time staff. The savings from cutting a day of service can therefore be wiped out by the 5% increase in personnel costs, even if employees can be retained to work the schedules.
- E. Use All Part-time Staff. Half-time and Hourly employees could exclusively be used to operate libraries open only 32 hours per week. As addressed above, this would result in greater turnover and increased costs associated with hiring, training and management of part-time staff and their schedules.
3. Reduce Hours by Pairing of Branches with Three-Day Open Hours. Branches could be paired, with one library open three days per week and the other open the opposite three days per week. Then Full-time staff could move from one branch to the other to complete their 40-hours. This alternative is not recommended for the following reasons:
- Public confusion over open hours;
 - Public dissatisfaction over loss of hours at their branch library in each "pair." In order to result in meaningful savings, at least half of the branches would need to be paired in this way;
 - No decrease in most non-personnel costs for building and grounds maintenance;
 - No decrease in costs to purchase, process and maintain the collections;
 - Risks in lapses of public service and staffing inefficiencies due to the need to clear book drops every day, discharge returned materials to avoid erroneous fines, and retrieve books requested for transfer to other branches by online Holds;
 - Increased risk of vandalism at libraries opens only three days per week.

With over 7 million books and videos being checked out annually at the San Diego Public Library, the operational issues and inefficiencies would be substantial. Public dissatisfaction with open hours across much of the City would be an even greater issue.

4. Tuesday through Saturday Open Hours. Some staffing reductions could be achieved by closing all branch libraries on Mondays with only one (1) hour per week reduction in open hours. The current 41 hours of service, Monday through Saturday, could be provided in 40 hours, five (5) days per week, Tuesday through Saturday. Benefits include:
 - A. This shift in open hours can reduce some staff costs while providing more consistent open hours per day. Each day open would offer 8 hours of service with one day offering a later shift (12:00 noon to 8:00 pm). The system wide consistency of hours between facilities and from one day of the week to the next would reduce the public's confusion over open hours.
 - B. Fridays and Saturdays could be open 8 hours instead only 5 hours for the public.
 - C. Cost savings would result by needing about 9.50 FTE fewer part-time staff to work on Fridays and Saturdays, when half of the regular, Full-time staff are working;
 - D. The City regulation (Personnel Regulation, Index Code H-6, Section II.A. - see Section 2. D. above) would be addressed to avoid the extra 5% salary cost by having two consecutive days of rest.
5. Reduce Sunday Hours. Sunday hours (1:00 – 5:00 pm) are provided at 12 branch libraries, with three (3) funded from private donations. Closing nine (9) branch libraries on Sundays would save approximately \$35,000 to \$70,000 annually per branch library, including Personnel and Non-personnel expenses, and depending on the size and activity level of the facility. The loss of Sunday hours could also be mitigated by going to a Tuesday through Saturday, 5-day schedule with a full 8-hours open on Fridays and Saturdays.

The options for reduced hours at branch libraries, as discussed above, do not approach the 10% reduction in costs being requested. Reducing branch library hours would also have a larger negative service impact on the public compared to the alternative of closing several branch libraries that are smaller in size, with fewer resources and with lower public use. The City of San Diego is unique in the number of library facilities offered per capita. Library patrons here have the advantage of being able to use alternative public libraries located in relatively close proximity.

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