



Memorandum

TO: Rules Committee

FROM: Councilmember Pierluigi Oliverio

SUBJECT: Utilizing Volunteers to Augment
San Jose Libraries

DATE: December 21, 2011

Approved:

Date:

12-21-11

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the Administration to begin the meet and confer process with the union to include the utilization of volunteers to help augment the daily workload needed to operate City libraries.

BACKGROUND

Due to flat tax revenues and escalating pension costs, the City of San Jose has been forced to cut library hours as well as make million dollar sacrifices in all city departments last year. Even with all of the cuts we have taken, San Jose continues to have a budget deficit. Further, current direction from the City Manger to balance next years budget is to cut an additional \$2 million from the already limited library budget which includes not opening any of the four brand new libraries.

It is unlikely that the four currently closed libraries in four different council districts will actually open in the coming years with the existing delivery model. Instead there is a high probability that library hours across the city will be reduced again to balance the budget. At a time when we need to preserve our police staffing, it is unlikely for our libraries to receive any windfall of tax revenue.

We need to re-look at the current delivery model and seriously consider how we can incorporate volunteers to fully maximize the days and hours of operation of all our libraries.

I propose we immediately consider freezing any current vacant library positions and any future vacant positions that may result from retirements. The cost savings in the vacancies could be used to partially fund the cuts to balance the budget as requested by the City Manager.

My thoughts regarding volunteers would include at least 30% of aggregate library hours for operations staffed by unpaid volunteers, without layoffs for current library staff. 30% is a minimum and if a higher percentage could be achieved so be it. In comparison 71% percent of fire fighters in this country are volunteers.

I am hopeful the meet and confer process with the union would result in movement to incorporate volunteers. My fear is that if we don't make some changes now, then the council may have to consider

imposing this on behalf of the residents if an agreement is not reached with the union. Another cost savings alternative the Council may have to weigh in on would be to outsource the libraries to a 3rd party as is being done in other cities. Outsourcing would most likely bring layoffs so therefore utilizing volunteers should be sought first for our libraries.

San Jose is gifted to have beautiful libraries funded by voter passed bonds. Our goal should be to open these libraries as many hours per week as possible. The most important thing is to have the doors open.

As mentioned above the vast majority of fire fighters in the USA are volunteers therefore I believe, staffing a library would be less difficult in comparison. One reason for less difficulty is because 95% of San Jose library patrons today already use self-checkout for their library materials. Maximizing volunteer opportunities would open the door for both residents to utilize the library and for resident volunteers to come forward and be part of the solution.

Each branch library has a "Friends of the Library" group that could help facilitate volunteers. However there is a much larger group of residents not affiliated with the "Friends of the Library" groups that could be tapped. Much the same way volunteers near and far have come out to support the San Jose Municipal Rose Garden. Allowing volunteers to augment city staff would avoid layoffs and stretch our library department funding further to benefit our customer: San Jose Residents.