

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Work Session: Library Local Option Levy

Meeting Date: June 17, 2015
Department: Library, Recreation, and Cultural Services
www.eugene-or.gov

Agenda Item Number: A
Staff Contact: Connie Bennett
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ISSUE STATEMENT

At the January 14, 2015, work session, the City Council received information about the status of the Eugene Public Library funding and services, including the “Library of the Future” envisioned by the community and its leaders, and discussed initial options for a Library local option levy. The purpose of a local option levy would be as a supplement to current general fund support, enabling the City to invest in the Eugene Public Library and to sustainably operate the services at the level desired by the community. After discussion, the council voted unanimously to direct staff to prepare a comprehensive option to place a five- year library levy measure on the November ballot, with an additional work session to be determined for spring 2015.

BACKGROUND

The existing Library services are those currently supported by the General Fund budget for the Library. In addition to the General Fund, the Library currently provides a number of ongoing services with donated funding, for example, the free Summer Reading programs for all ages are supported by the Friends of the Eugene Public Library, and The Imagination Library early literacy program is funded by the Eugene Public Library Foundation. The total FY16 Proposed Budget for the Library is \$10.6 million.

Existing Service Level

- Downtown Library services 61 hours across seven days a week.
- Bethel and Sheldon Branch services 26 hours over five days a week.
- Publically available technology to use at the Library.
- Ability to use personal technology to access library services online 24/7.
- Some off-site programs serve those unable to come into the Library, such as storytimes to low-income children at daycares and large print book delivery to homebound seniors.
- Purchase of a limited amount of new materials.
- Offering approximately 1,000 free public programs annually, for all ages.

In January, the council discussed the value of the services to the community. The council also raised potential concerns about the community’s willingness to pay for a new local option levy, and identified directions they wished staff to explore further.

Developing Levy Options for the Eugene Public Library of the Future

In preparation for developing a Library local option levy to present to the council, the City contracted with Strategy Research Institute (SRI) to conduct a scientific survey to explore the community's opinions and priorities regarding library services and to learn the probable level of support for a five-year local option levy as a supplement to the General Fund. The survey results confirmed community support for a Library Local Option Levy. The results also reaffirmed the priorities heard repeatedly from the council, from Library users and supporters, and from the "Library of the Future" focus groups; they are also in alignment with the national trends in best practices in library services. The library services most valued by the community continue to be:

- Promote early literacy.
- Support success in school and work.
- Ensure equity of access.

Library Levy Options

The two local option levy alternatives summarized below were developed to address the public's concern about current barriers to accessing services –shortened hours, limited neighborhood convenience, not enough space for programs or services for teens, and constraints on access to technology, including Makerspace – while remaining within the threshold of willingness to pay. The levy alternatives focus on the operational priorities identified in the survey and recommended by the council, which is to invest in services at existing branches (increasing hours and adding new services), and to bring library services to the community through outreach services.

The second option includes and expands on the previous one, and both are based on the core library services supported at the existing level of funding. These are preliminary estimates. As the levy proposal moves forward these estimates will be further reviewed and refined.

Option 1 - \$2.5 to \$2.7 million/year, or \$33-37/year for a typical household (approx. \$3/month)

Option 1 begins with the existing service level, and adds the following to meet current needs:

- Add 22 hours each week at both Bethel and Sheldon Branch Libraries, to be open 48 hours over six days a week.
- Add three hours on Sunday mornings each week at the Downtown Library, to be open 64 hours over seven days a week.
- Add \$300,000 to the Library's materials budget for new books and other resources, and ensure a shorter "wait time" for the most popular items.
- Expand the early literacy outreach and other volunteer programs.
- Expand shared "Makerspace" to provide community members with access to and training on tools and equipment they might not be able to afford individually.
- Increase programs and events for all ages, with particular focus on teens.
- Add technology (tablets and/or laptops) to lend for public use on-site at both branches.

Option 2 - \$3.5 to \$3.7 million/year; \$45-49/year for a typical household (approx. \$4/month)

Option 2 includes everything in Option 1, PLUS additional services to increase access:

- Add four hours on Sunday afternoons at both branches, expanding branch hours to 52 hours each week across seven days and opening book-drops 24/7.
- Expand access by increasing Downtown hours by five hours on weekday mornings, including additional early literacy programs.
- Expand community outreach visits, to bring library services to people where they are already gathered, such as schools and businesses.
- Add tablets and laptops to lend for public use on-site at the Downtown Library.

Timing

In order to place a measure on the November 3, 2015, general election ballot, the council must act by July 29, 2015 (last meeting before summer break). Meetings are tentatively scheduled for July 13 and July 27 for continued council discussion and decision making.

Other Background Information

Under Oregon law, a property tax measure placed on either a primary election ballot (May) or a general election ballot (November) requires a simple majority of the votes cast in the election.

RELATED CITY POLICIES

This item relates to the following Council Goals:

- *Accessible and Thriving Culture and Recreation:* A community where arts and outdoors are integral to our social and economic well-being and are available to all.
- *Sustainable Development*
- *Effective and Accountable Municipal Government*

City of Eugene Financial Management Goals and Policies

Policy C.6 - Non-recurring revenue

"Except for local option levies approved by the voters, the City will use non-recurring revenue on limited-duration services, capital projects, equipment requirements, or services that can be terminated without significant disruption in the community or City organization."

COUNCIL OPTIONS

This is an informational Work Session.

SUGGESTED MOTION

No motion is proposed at this time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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