CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY COMMISSION

AGENDA ATTACHMENT 2

MEETING DATE: Thursday, January 17, 2019
AGENDA ITEM #: 3.
ITEM: PUBLIC COMMENT

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Commission members will be presented with a communication from a patron and the County Library's response.
This message was submitted to the Library Commission.

emailmessage: This message was submitted to the Library Commission.

subject: Commission mail, Please Reconsider County Library Closures During Poor Air Quality

to: ccclibcommission@cclib.org

comments:
I am writing to express my displeasure at the County's decision to close the Libraries today.

As a parent of 2 kids aged 9, and 10, our family is a frequent user of the library system. We find it to be an absolute treasure. While we use the libraries year-round, we really rely on them when schools are out of session, especially during the summer, and on breaks.

As we deal with unprecedented smoke in the area, many families like mine are trying to find engaging activities for our kids to do, especially when they can't be outside. After another horrendous week of smoke, and more school cancellations, coupled with a week off of school for thanksgiving breaks, it was quite a relief to find the libraries open on Friday. We found ourselves in Walnut Creek, and their decision to close their automatic doors and use a side entrance was a wise one. What a shame then to find out today that the indoor sanctuaries of our libraries remained closed system-wide today. This is happening on the heels of a Veteran's Day closure that also corresponded with awful air quality.

In the inevitable poor air quality days of the future, might I recommend that at least a few of the systems libraries remain open (perhaps one in each area of the county, e.g. Richmond, Pittsburg, Concord / Walnut Creek, San Ramon), to offer families and residents a safe and engaging area to shelter in place, or at least check out books to bring home? I know San Francisco designated its main branch as a refuge from the smoke, and many local museums have decided to wave entry fees. Is there not a role for our libraries during times like these?

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and your incredibly important public service that you provide to over 1 million residents of our county.

Name: Will Gregory

emailaddress: wwgregory@gmail.com

spambegone: Library
Dear Mr. Gregory,

Thank you for your email and for your kind words about the Library. I am so glad that you take advantage of our services!

Closing the libraries was not an easy decision and, while an inconvenience for library patrons, we believe an abundance of caution was necessary when it came to the health of the public and library staff.

The decision to close all libraries was primarily due to the "Very Unhealthy" air quality rating by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District combined with the fact that none of the 26 libraries in the Contra Costa County Library system has HEPA filters on the HVACs. We also discovered that most do not have the ability to recirculate only interior air nor do most have "air-lock" doors (an enclosed entry way with a second door to the library). As a result, external air was being pulled into our library buildings and both patrons and staff were exhibiting symptoms of illness. Had we not closed the libraries, the public and library employees would have been exposed to continuous poor air quality and members of the public might be encouraged to leave homes or other shelters with cleaner air to travel to the library.

This situation of extremely unhealthy air quality is one that we have not ever had to navigate. As a result, we are taking this opportunity to assess what we might do better or differently next time. One of the things we are talking about is exactly what you are suggesting. We are assessing all our facilities (many of which are owned and operated by the cities) to find out whether there are some that can be used as clear air refuges in the future.

During these few days of inconvenience, I hope you were able to take advantage of the online resources offered by the Library.

Please do feel free to reach out to me if you have any further questions or concerns.

Thank you,

Alison McKee
Deputy County Librarian • Contra Costa County Library

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From: Library Administration
Sent: Monday, November 19, 2018 11:21 AM
To: ASM
Subject: FW: Please Reconsider County Library Closures During Poor Air Quality

Libadmin email.

Thank you,

Shannon Ladage
Office Manager • Contra Costa County Library

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