



## City of Alameda • California

November 10, 2021

Dear President Bales and Members of the Library Board,

This letter is to bring you up to date on activities during the months of September and October, 2021 and to provide a look forward to some of the activities, programs and plans we are working on.

The Library Board will most likely continue to meet virtually at least through the end of the calendar year. Currently the State allows for elected Councils, Boards and Commissions to meet virtually as long as they make a "finding" that there is still a health emergency in effect. The Alameda City Council makes this determination monthly, expects to continue to have Zoom Council meetings at least through the end of the calendar year and as our City Council goes, so the Boards and Commissions will follow. If the format of our meetings change, I will let you know as soon as I know.

The City requires all City Employees to be vaccinated or undergo twice weekly testing. I am pleased to report that 100% of the Library staff are fully vaccinated. All volunteers in the library will also be required to be vaccinated.

**Modified Library Services Reports: (Consent Agenda).** Just a reminder that I have not included the "regular" Library Services Report in your Board Packet because we aren't collecting most of those statistics. I have included some numbers, trends, and other interesting activities/services provided to the community during the closure. The Library Services Report have The Expenditure Reports and Check Registers for September and October are also included.

**We have new Library Board Members!** Congratulations to our newest Library Board Members Dimple Kanji and Sarah Strickler. They were sworn in at the September 21 City Council meeting and will be joining us for the November 10 Library Board meeting.

**Main Library Update.** Congratulations to Brian Trieu, Brian was one of our part time Library Associates and successfully navigated the interview process to be hired as our new full time Library Technician, Volunteer Coordinator. Brian will work closely with Circulation Coordinator Kevin Tam and will be responsible for the recruitment, training, and supervision of our Library Volunteers (not the Friends of the Library volunteers). Brian starts his full time position on Monday, November 8.

As you know, all three libraries are now reopened to their pre-Covid hours. Face coverings (covering both your nose and your chin) are required, for ages 3 and older, in all City buildings and physical distancing is encouraged. Most library services have been restored, circulation is very close to pre-Covid numbers but the door count is down. Staff is working on ideas to draw more members of the public into the libraries, even though staff also feel that the buildings are pretty busy. Programs for adults, teens and tweens are being offered both in-person and some on a hybrid basis. Gardening, various book groups, the Teen Advisory Board (TAB), Dungeons & Dragons, crafting, and science lectures, just to name a few. In-person programs for younger customers are still on hold since they are not yet vaccinated. The Children's Department offers a plethora of online programs for children, from storytimes, crafts, readings of chapter books, book clubs, reading games, foodie Fridays and Maker Mondays. Many of the online programs have had hundreds of views.

Alameda Free Library  
1550 Oak Street  
Alameda, California 94501-2932  
510.747.7777 • Fax 510.865.1230

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On October 11 the Library Staff held our bi-annual Staff Development Day. We close all three libraries so everyone can attend, full time staff all attend and as many part time staff as we can schedule (some have other jobs). The agenda usually consists of introductions of new staff members (which was considerable this meeting), division reports, some group program and/or team building, news about what's going on in the City and our "Stay 'Til the End" raffle. I had originally planned on doing a little Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) training but changed the week before because we have a few library customers who are disrespectful of our staff. They have been working their way through the staff from last hired to the most experienced, they demean the staff by saying things like they are inadequate, stupid, how did you get hired?, you call yourself a librarian, etc. They do not raise their voices, they are not threatening bodily harm. Sometimes they are very kind and complimentary and then they flip and say very disrespectful things. These people are in the library nearly every day from opening until closing. We know the staff are "public servants" but the constant belittling is wearing the staff down to the point where people are quitting, without another job lined up! I worked with Human Resources for some stress management speakers or videos, we used videos. I distributed information regarding the City's Employee Assistance Program if they need someone to talk to. I have a line on a good speaker to specifically speak to library situations and deescalating confrontations, stress management and "growing a thicker skin" but she isn't available until our spring staff day. I have promised the staff that I will continue to pursue tools to help them deal with these situations. Then we also discussed emergency procedures. In your Board Packet you will find the Library's Employee Emergency Procedures. I pulled together this information a couple of years ago and was waiting for approval to distribute. After waiting for years and with so many new staff members I decided to just update any phone numbers and distribute. The copy included in the Board Packet has the library supervisor phone numbers redacted as some are personal phone numbers. I hope you find some useful information in the manual for your families as well.

The Main Library continues to have issues with unsheltered folks outside the building. As you may know, the benches under the portico in front of the Main Library were removed as a hygiene issue. One or more of the folks out front was defecating directly on the bench(es) and others were placing their sleeping bags on those same benches, the smell, the bio-hazard issues were just too much. So those four benches were removed and the area is power washed monthly by the City's Urban Runoff team (they vacuum up the water after power washing, it does not go down the storm drain). The lone bench on the Lincoln Avenue side remained. That bench was placed there to force people to make a wider turn around the corner thus avoiding walking into the arms of the bike repair station. Since the benches out front were removed, an unsheltered person has taken up camp on that Lincoln Avenue bench with a lot of belongings. There are complaints weekly about that corner encampment. The gentleman has refused services when offered by Operation Dignity. Once the rains began a few weeks ago the library now has four or five persons camping under the portico. They are not blocking the sidewalk or entrance so we cannot ask them to move. They are regularly offered assistance and services, which they decline. The Library is now receiving complaints about the folks out front. So, without those benches, we will relocate the bike repair station to under the portico and remove the bench on the corner.

**Practice What You Learned:** Coincidentally, I had taken the Friday after the Staff Development Day off but was running in to finish a report then was planning on leaving. Imagine my surprise when I turned the corner from Park St. to Lincoln Ave. and saw the street blocked by fire engines and a fire truck with the ladder extended. I thought maybe there was a car accident at the intersection when I realized the ladder was extended to the library roof! I pulled in the library parking lot to find a second ladder truck with outriggers and ladder extended. I called the supervisor of the day just as he was calling me. He said staff had evacuated the building at the request of the fire department. When I asked where they were, he said "At the Assembly Area"....I was so proud of the staff who had calmly cleared the building, someone had the daily schedule in hand to take roll and

make sure all were out of the building and another had the first aid kit in hand, they were across the street in the City Hall parking lot, out of the way of the firefighters. They listened and learned on Monday and put that into practice on Friday. I also told them this was not the drill I have planned for the near future. All this occurred before we were open to the public so only the staff was involved in the evacuation of the building. There was an electrical burning smell coming from below the floor in the children's area. The smell was acrid and you could feel it in your throat. Fire located which vents the smell was coming from and Public Works shut down power to those fans. Staff was told they could re-enter but we didn't know how long it would take to air out the building and the smell had drifted upstairs. All the public spaces reeked of that electrical smell. I made the call not to open to the public that day and we posted notices online as well. I had staff prep to open the next day then I would send them home. I was in contact with our environmental systems company and they quickly sent a mechanic out to determine where and what was causing the burning smell. After a lot of detective work and having the technicians remote into our system the shorted-out blower was located. I was assured that there would be no further burning smell when we opened to the public on Saturday and Sunday and the mechanic would return on Monday to continue his investigations. I did stop in on Saturday and all seemed normal, you could not smell anything odd unless you knelt down and put your nose next to the offending vent. I was informed that most of the fans and blowers have about a 7 year lifespan and ours have been working well for over 15 years so this may happen again. Repairs are underway.

**Access Key Card Project.** This project has launched and continues to inch forward. The City is working to bring on vendor support should the card readers malfunction. The Library's IT person manages the software side and also does his best to assist with minor hardware issues but if he can't resolve a problem, we have no one to turn to. In the meantime, the Library finally got approval to move forward to print on the actual access cards. There will be the "City of Alameda", the City Seal, the Employee photograph, First Name and Last Initial on the front and language indicating this individual is an emergency disaster worker when recalled on the back. The Library is the only department with the access cards (we don't really count APD) so we need to make sure we have an appropriate camera, lighting, and a supply of blank cards because they will no longer be re-useable once printed. A small expense. Once we have the equipment ready to go, staff will have to stop in with our IT person and have their picture taken and card printed.

**Electrifying the West End Library.** The West End HVAC install of the furnace & water heater replacement is progressing. The installation of the new furnace and air conditioning unit is complete and has been commissioned to the City on October 28, with a very short punch list of only four easy items. The securing of the operating windows and replacement of the water heater is on hold because the funding to be used for our project has been spent on other City emergencies. We are looking for alternate funding or we wait until the new fiscal year (FY2022-23). The program to talk about the electrification project has been rescheduled to January 2022. The good news is with the new AC unit, the West End is ready to be a Cooling Center or Fresh Air Center if necessary.

**American Red Cross Blood Drives.** The Library's next quarterly Red Cross Blood Drive is Tuesday, November 9. The Blood Drive donors will enter and exit through the front doors with the rest of our public.

**American Rescue Plan Funding.** The City Council decision on which project to fund with the federal dollars will once again be presented to the City Council at the December 7 meeting. Although there is a lot of discussion on how and on what to spend these dollars, there is a lot of support for the Library's request for \$50,000 to launch a pilot program of lending hot spots. The plan would be, with one time monies, to start with about 30 hot spots and a 4 year contract. Starting small would allow the library time to make sure our policies

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and procedures work and time to secure continuing funding if the pilot is successful. Currently the library expects to have these hot spots check out for 3 weeks and be renewable if no one is waiting for one (place a hold)

**National Park Service Japanese American Containment Site Grant Project.** This project continues to move forward but it is very time consuming working with volunteers and talking the elderly into agreeing to be interviewed when their whole lives they have been told not to talk about their wartime experiences. We have very good interviewer lined up but the contracting process from the City was too onerous and she has pulled out of the project. We may just submit fewer interviews and more encyclopedia articles or something. I am currently working with Densho to get their Service Provider Agreement in place so we can pay for some of their work and they will be coming to Alameda in February to assist with a few of the interviews while they are in the Bay Area doing other Densho work.

**Japantown Historical Markers.** The Art Walk was a wonderful, joyous event. Hundreds of people attended and were treated to a varied cultural experience. Some people were surprised that it was more than just Japanese Americans who attended the program. The children in the car photograph, which was the main photo used for the Art Walk, are now in their 90's and they were in attendance with their caregiver. Rhythmix did a fabulous job. The largest crowd was at the Library then as the program moved to the Buddhist Temple, it shrank a bit and the smallest venue was at the Buena Vista United Methodist Church but people were happy to stand a little closer and hear the words of a couple Internment Camp survivors (actually, both were born in camp) and hear the music of the drumming program. There were mockups of the markers at each site, smaller than the actuals will be. A few weeks after the program we have settled on the size of the markers which will determine how many photographs and how much text can be on each marker. We are targeting completion of all four markers in the spring of 2022, hopefully late April or early May.

**Friends of the Library.** The Friends continue to work hard. The book sales are still the major topic of discussion. The book sale committee continues to work on creating a mini-used book store in the Friend's sorting space at the Main Library. They would still sort donations in that room but rather than have sorting bins arranged throughout, shelving would be installed for customer browsing. Shelving has been ordered but not yet delivered. They are not yet accepting book donations. They hope to open the new store in mid-January when Dewey's Friends Café reopens.

Dewey's Friends Café is targeting January 18 (after the Martin Luther King Jr Holiday) to reopen. Plans can change depending on the Health Department orders and the City's policies. The City expects to begin discussions of face coverings and physical distancing and reopening other City facilities in early to mid-December. The café will take their direction from the library.

The Live @ the Library Concert series still hopes to return however now the start date is in question. We are told there is no shortage of musicians willing to perform. It's more a matter of space in the venue. The primary organizer wants the occupancy restriction lifted before we have our first concert. More news as it comes.

The Friends have been very successful with their online programs; art docent lectures and author talks. Over 3,000 people have attended the programs as they were presented since January 2021 and even more have watched the presentations on the Friends YouTube channel.

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The next Friends Board meeting will be on Monday, November 22 via Zoom at 6:30 p.m. The Friends have decided to continue the Zoom format for their Board meetings at least through the end of the calendar year and they do not meet in December.

**Alameda Reads.** The pandemic, while extremely disruptive to the program, has given them an opportunity to reset and reevaluate how they can best serve our learners while maintaining a safe and productive work environment for our staff and volunteers. As a result, they will be changing the hours that the program is open to the public to: Monday – Thursday, 10:00a – 2:00p.

Barb says these will be the Alameda Reads hours for the foreseeable future. If they feel that the volume of learners requires more hours, they will expand by opening earlier and/or staying open a little later. They currently do not have plans at this time to resume evening hours.

If you have any questions about the items to be considered at the Board meeting, or if you would like to discuss these or any other items, please email me at [jchisaki@alamedaca.gov](mailto:jchisaki@alamedaca.gov) or if it is not urgent, please leave me a message at 747-7747.

Sincerely,



Jane Chisaki  
Library Director