



City of Alameda • California

March 13, 2019

Dear President Silva and Members of the Library Board,

This letter is to bring you up to date on activities during the months of January and February 2019, and to provide a look forward to some of the projects which will be coming up and a few we were working on.

Library Services Reports: (Consent Agenda). The December 2018 and January 2019 Library Services Reports are included in your Board Packet. The Expenditure Reports for January and February are also included.

Main Library Update. These last eight weeks have been a doozy.

The new digital streaming services launched without a hitch and they are very popular. All comments from the public have been positive. In order to give you a glimpse of how popular the new streaming service is, included in your Board Packet is a page that shows you the top five titles requested/downloaded/viewed/listened to in the various categories on Hoopla and the top five videos played on Kanopy in February. So far our limited funding allotment has been satisfactory. Upcoming events that might impact the Hoopla and Kanopy budget is Summer Reading and our “how-to” computer classes. Hopefully in the new budget year we will be able to increase our funding allotment for these services. The instructional digital streaming class was filled both times it has been offered. Check out these new services if you haven’t already.

The hiring of a Strategic Plan consultant has slowed to a crawl as other more urgent issues have arisen. Also, I have been in contact with one consultant and have not been able to get call-backs from several others. At this point I think President Silva and I can interview the one and if we are satisfied, can move forward as I have documented my numerous attempts to contact other consultants.

I was out sick for over a week with the flu and have returned to work, not quite 100% but I’m close. During these last few weeks our homeless regulars have become an issue. Confrontations are escalating and both the public and the staff are not comfortable and are occasionally afraid, in the library. This has taken priority in my activities. We are exploring adding deterrents to the benches out front, there are a couple of folk who lay in the bench and shout obscenities at people, including parents and children, making them afraid to walk past to enter the building. Staff have found weapons hidden in the stacks, most recently a “knife” that appears to be a putty knife with a sharpened edge in the magazines. There is one individual who we know has mental issues coming in and begins shouting at no one but the language is less than desirable and when confronted by staff to quiet himself or be asked to leave, he becomes more belligerent. Police are called but sometimes they don’t arrive before he moves on. We know he can control himself to a certain extent because some days he will calm down, take a newspaper and read for the day. Recently we had to call the police about him multiple times on the same day and eventually he was issued a Trespass Warning. He is not allowed in the library and thankfully we have not seen him for the last few days, all staff and the police are aware of him. I am exploring hiring a part time security person to patrol both inside and around the main library. We have had complaints about the library parking lot, we are looking at adding “Library Parking Only” signs with the added “vehicles will be

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towed at owner's expense" or something like that. We have a lot of Park Street business owners & their customers are parking in our lot during open hours. A new spin studio opened on the corner of Park St and Times Way and I've heard that the owner is suggesting to new students that if they can't find parking on Park St, the Library lot is available for free. The police don't have enough parking enforcement folk to regularly patrol our lot but will come ticket when we call about a specific vehicle. It has not been enough of a deterrent.

The Big Truck Bonanza will hopefully make its return this spring. Supervising Librarian Eva Volin has made contact with the other city departments to inquire of their participation so we can reserve the City Hall parking lot for the event. Police, Fire, AMP, Public Works, and the Lego Jeep have all been contacted and hopefully the children's department can pull it together for April 27.

Fine Elimination. This item is on the agenda for discussion. In your packet you will find a White Paper on eliminating fines for children's materials but we want to do both children's and adult materials. Also a brief report on our fines, time spent, monies involved, etc. for the month of January 2019. Some discussion points and a page on how we hope to implement this in Alameda. I have also included a few press releases and/or news articles of other libraries who have eliminated their fines. Staff have a lot of good ideas for a FAQ page for the web page and to assist staff in answer questions when this is implemented. If the Library Board approves with moving forward with fine elimination we need to think how & when to inform the City Council. This item is the meat of the meeting in March and our expectation is to go fine free with the start of the new fiscal year.

Budget. The mid-year budget (FY18-19) amendments will be presented to the City Council at the March 19 meeting. The Library is not asking for any adjustments, we are within our budget and do not have any additional asks at this time. The City is deep in preparation for the biennial budget presentations (FY19-20 and FY20-21). For the first time since the new building opened we will be asking for three new full time positions. These positions are a Librarian I for the Information Desk, Words on Wheels (book bike), and outreach; a Librarian I to make the part time School Resource Liaison (SRL) a full time position thus allowing us to expand services. In one month our part time SRL hosted 75 students in library tours; visited 17 classes at their schools reaching 556 students; organized the "Library to Go" boxes, which are curriculum based subject boxes with books, web resources, and other materials for teachers to check out; as well as working on connecting to PTAs, assisting with a new program roll-out for the Bay Farm Library, conducting outreach to teachers at several public & private elementary schools, organizing & promoting an author visit by Stuart Gibbs and continuing to contact school librarians, elementary & middle school teachers about our School Resource Services. The third position would be to hire a full time Library Technician to staff the computer lab, be the lead manager for the library web page, assist with social media, teach more classes in the lab and offer more open lab times. We also have the opportunity to partner with AUSD in a train the trainer class to teach their people how to teach basic computer skills so they can reach out to families for whom English is not their first language. They will also translate our computer lab materials into the four most frequent languages used in the school district at no cost to the library. We will move forward with this partnership with our part time computer lab tech but it will involve taking time away from open lab sessions. The requests for positions have been submitted and at this point, no decision as to put one or all three forward to the City Council, budget meetings with Finance and the City Manager is usually the next step in the process but without a City Manager on board yet, I am not certain of the timing in the budget process. No public meetings have been scheduled beyond an adoption date of June 18, a regular City Council meeting.

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Other items in the budget are relatively routine and our bottom line request for operations is very similar to our past budgets. There will be a marked increase in the salaries & benefits since the City's minimum wage will increase to \$13.50 on July 1, 2019 and to \$15.00 on July 1, 2020. When the minimum wage increases the separation between the classifications also must be studied. All part time employees will receive increases when the minimum wage increases.

New City Web Page. The new City web page has launched, the Library web page (sub-site) has also launched. Currently there is a short satisfaction survey at the top of the library page to get feedback on the new format, problems or other issues that customers have had navigating the new site. Issues from the survey have been few and a simple email or call to the customer solved their problems. The Library Web Team, led by Supervising Librarian Marlon Romero, Trina Dikitannan, Cosette Ratliff, and Dawn Boyer, have identified other small issues but the whole web page is still a work in progress. Overall, staff is happy with the new page and the tweaking continues. Please feel free to comment about the good, bad, or ugly that you may have encountered while using the new web site.

Student Connect Code. Teens are continuing to come into the library to use their Connect Codes to access the computers. The streaming services are especially popular with the teens. Statistics are beginning to show that teachers and teens are starting to use the databases as well. Demonstration visits by Teen Librarian Hallie Fields and her team are proving very beneficial. They're hoping to continue to see a rise in teens coming to the library to use their codes.

Retirement. As was mentioned in the last Board Letter, long time employee Carol Roth has retired. Staff miss her terribly and the recruitment is almost complete. We expect an offer letter to be sent to the successful candidate next week and the spot filled by the end of March. If the offer is accepted before the Library Board meeting, I will tell you more about the new employee.

Now the bad news. Adult & Branch Services Supervising Librarian Cosette Ratliff has announced her retirement from our library effective May 9. Her last day in the building will be May 2. Cosette has done a wonderful job these past seven years and we are really sad to lose her. Upon her retirement Cosette will be moving out of the country. While on vacation earlier in the year she purchased a house in Penzance, England. The house closes in March, she's taking a short trip to hook up utilities, her Mother will move there in April and Cosette will follow at the end of May. We do not have anyone in a position to step up and take over Adult & Branch Services. Cosette will leave BIG shoes to fill, although she is giving us a lot of notice.

Not a retirement but a restructure in the City, Information Technology Manager Leon King retired after 27 years with the City. The IT department is promoting one of their IT System Analysts to the Manager position and in the process, laterally moving David Boxton from the Library to general City IT. David will be out of the library in mid-March, the Library will have to recruit and hire a new Library IT person. Leon's last day on the books is March 28 so the recruitment cannot happen before then. The new hire will work under the direction of the Library and not the City Information Technology Department. I am working with Supervising Librarian Marlon Romero to shape the position so we hire the skills we need to keep the libraries running in top condition. In the end, this may be a good thing to have someone totally dedicated to the library.

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City Changes. The City Council has selected a new City Manager. His name is Eric Levitt and he is currently the City Manager for the City of Simi Valley. He will begin in Alameda on April 12. Interim City Manager Dave Rudat will complete his term with Alameda in mid-March and the City Council will appoint an acting from city staff to bridge the period from Mr. Rudat's departure and Mr. Levitt's arrival.

Alameda Recreation and Parks Director Amy Wooldridge is currently the acting Assistant City Manager.

No word on the selection of a new City Attorney. Michael Roush continues to be the Acting City Attorney.

Friends of the Library. The Book Sale storage issues sort of came to a head in early February. The warehouse continued to be an issue and have break-ins nearly every weekend. I made a trip out with the book sale volunteers and was appalled at what we found. It was apparent that people were in the building as they created a seating area using book boxes and a sheet a glass as their coffee table with broken office chairs around it. It looked like a quarter of the previously packed boxes were opened and books thrown around, empty boxes were scattered and many smashed and there was a lot of water on the ground and most of the boxes with and without books were wet and moldy. Lamps purchased for the book sale were stored there, one was missing, one was broken, and one was still there. The bag of light bulbs were missing. We took the lamps and some of the materials that day to a new, dry, but very small, donated space at Michaan's Auctions. Upon seeing the condition of the boxes in the original warehouse the Friends decided to bite the bullet and pay for storage. They have signed a short term agreement for a self-storage unit near Alameda Point. The company provided one time movers to move the boxes from the warehouse to the new storage site. A group of intrepid book sale volunteers assembled the morning of the move to stage the boxes for the movers only to again discover a mess at the warehouse. The break-in was on the second floor and they broke pipes flooding the first floor. The Friends, nor I, were notified and about a third of the boxes were soaking wet and when opened, filled with black mold. It was disappointing that the security company failed to notify us causing several thousand dollars in loss and hours of work sorting & boxing the books. The good news is the Friends are completely out of that warehouse and we have turned in all keys to that building. In the meantime, the City Public Works Department has identified a space in a larger building that would have to be cleared out before the Friends could move it. The room is much larger and we think barely large enough for sale storage. The building is alarmed and will also be housing materials from Public Works, Alameda Police, Recreation and Parks, and Alameda Fire, so we feel confident that break-ins will be much fewer. Now we wait for the new space to become available, hopefully soon – before we run out of space, again.

The Friends are co-sponsored a film titled, "Dark Money," with the Association of University Women on February 13. The room was filled and the discussions were great. We were impressed by the community response to a film that has been available in theaters and on television. The Friends programming success continues with the popular Art Docent Lectures. The lecturer was from the Oakland Museum which does not have a visiting docent program. The presentation was on the influential husband and wife design team Charles and Ray Eames, the visionaries behind the iconic Eames chairs. Someone said they went to the Oakland Museum to see the exhibit after attending our docent program and they felt they learned more at the docent program than from the signs at the exhibit itself. She thanked the Friends for hosting these programs. The Friends wrapped up their February programming with a program called "Black Women Leaders: Our Stories" three prominent Alameda Black women leaders discussed their lives and careers during a panel discussion. The panelists were Christine Chilcott, CEO of Girls Incorporated of

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the Island City; Ardella J. Dailey, EdD, Alameda Unified School District trustee, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership in the College of Education and Allied Studies, Cal State East Bay, first black superintendent of AUSD; and Vickie R. Smith, a long-time activist for diversity and equity in schools, founder of the Encinal High School Black Student Union while a student, and retired Family Support Services Liaison for Alameda Unified School District. The discussion was moderated by Akilah Monifa, also an Alameda resident and editor/writer for a number of publications and radio outlets specializing in current events, sports, media, race, class, sexual orientation, arts and pop culture. Huge attendance and great discussions. The Friends on considering making their February Black History Month program themes to highlight Alameda African Americans.

The Friends have no new news regarding their strategic planning process.

The next Friends Board meeting will be on Monday, March 25, at the Main Library in the Family Study Room at 6:30 p.m. These meetings are open to all.

Alameda Reads. Literacy Coordinator Barbara Papik is busy matching newly trained tutors with new learners. Their small group classes were well attended throughout December despite the holidays. There's not a lot of "news" from Alameda Reads for December; they just keep working away at the usual (and joyful) process of helping their adult learners. They anticipate an influx of new learners as well as a renewed interest by the community in volunteering during January. Barbara thinks it is New Year's resolutions that usually cause a spike in volunteerism.

Barbara's favorite learner story for this report: During each Writing Practice class, the instructor introduces an American idiom and has the students use it in their writing during that lesson. In December, the idiom was "red letter day." One of the learners wrote the following: *"I went to the DMV and got my driver's license. It was a red letter day!" The rest of the group told her that she had come up with a very good example and wanted to know if it had actually happened. She said, "Yes! Yesterday!"*

Today I received another learner story from Barbara, it's too good to leave out. Another of our learners achieved a significant goal...I think his tutor's words express it best: *"Vu and I had our final two meetings this month and worked on preparation for his U.S. Citizenship test. At our final meeting on 1/20 we reviewed all 100 questions and he got them all right. Vu took the test on 1/24 and passed. He will be a U.S. Citizen in a few weeks! This seemed like a natural ending to our 4 years together. During that time he has succeeded in all of this goals – a 4.0 G.P. A. at College of Alameda, acceptance at UC Berkeley (complete with financial aid!), a summer internship with a computer company and now passing the citizenship test. It has been such a pleasure working with Vu and seeing his progress and success. I shall miss him!"*

Alameda Reads continues to change lives.

The latest session of tutor training concluded on December 8th. We have 3 new tutors to match with Learners. The next tutor training is scheduled for February 19th-March 2nd.

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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 or if it is not urgent, please leave me a message at 747-7747.

Sincerely,



Jane Chisaki
Library Director