



City of Alameda • California

January 12, 2022

Dear President Bales and Members of the Library Board,

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

The Library Board will most likely continue to meet virtually at least through the end of the fiscal year as the COVID-19 Omicron variant is currently surging after the holidays. 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 and continues to have Zoom Council meetings. 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.

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 November and December are also included in this packet. With the new accounting software the reports look different. Please look at the expenditure and check register reports in your packet, if these are fine then we will continue with these. Some of the old request formats create 18 or more pages of check register lines (same vendor multiple purchases). It seemed like a waste of paper. If there is something you feel you need to see, we will have to try to figure out the reports to include the desired information. We will discuss at the meeting the best report format.

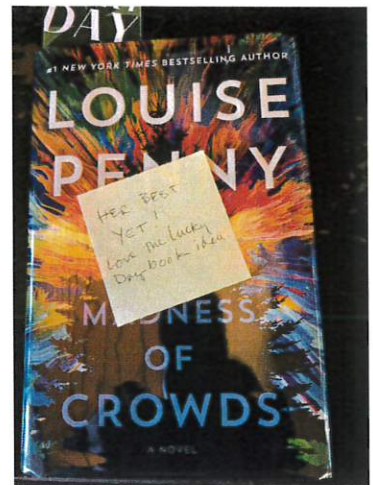
Sunshine Ordinance Training: Sorry if you were not able to watch the Zoom Sunshine Ordinance Training that was offered by the City in December. It also seems that the Clerk’s Office sent two links, one for staff and one for Boards & Commissions...the one for the Boards & Commissions was incorrect!! The City Clerk send out the link to the video training, so here it is. Please watch it so you can sign off the training in good conscious. (I don’t have new forms or anything for you to sign)

In case any Board/Commission members who could not attend the training, the video is available here: <https://youtu.be/T5ns8blYBXA>

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP). The City is moving to a new Enterprise Resource Planning software system from Tyler Munis. This has been in the works for months but the staff training didn’t really begin until fall. Accounts payable has been transitioning over and it has been a slow and painful process, some of our vendors are still awaiting payment from October. Payroll has been “practicing” with staff all entering their own time on an electronic timesheet however during these practice payrolls both paper timesheets and electronic timesheets needed to be submitted. With the holidays and illnesses it has been a very stressful process. The payroll piece will be going live with the next pay period and frankly, staff are not really looking forward to it but as long as their paychecks are correct, it’s OK? Accounts payable still is inching along and it is frustrating to receive delinquent notices when you’ve processed the bill but it still hasn’t been paid. We keep asking our vendors to be patient and hopefully the

bills will be paid soon. Now that the holidays are over the hope is things will move more quickly however the Covid-19 surge is causing staff city wide to fall like snowflakes.

Main Library Update. Do you feel lucky? If you are any of our libraries, check out our new “Lucky Day” collections! The Lucky Day Collection is a collection of highly popular books that are available for immediate check-out. If you find a book on the Lucky Day shelf, you can immediately check it out even when there are multiple holds on the same title in our regular collection. If it's on the shelf, it's your “Lucky Day!” The ^{SEP}AFL Lucky Day Collection currently consists of adult bestselling fiction and nonfiction books. People may only check out one Lucky Day book for three weeks at one time. No holds, no renewals. We received this note in the book return:



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. With the post-holiday surge of positive cases of Covid-19 and the Omicron variant, staffing is close to razor thin, we are relieved that we got through the holidays with all the requests for time off and staff calling in sick. Staffing continues to be a bit tenuous but we are operating as normally as possible. I have been in touch with the City Manager and the City is not talking about closing again or asking the library to reduce hours. Currently, most library services have been restored, circulation is very close to pre-Covid numbers but the door count is down. As of January 5, 2022 the Alameda County Health Department is forecasting the peak of the surge to happen within the next 14 days then level a bit and begin to improve. Hospitalizations in Alameda are low but there is a staffing concern. Not a crisis but something for officials to keep an eye on. Although the Library has not been asked, the Library Management team and I have been talking about service priorities and what the library needs to offer in the event our staffing drops and we have to refocus our work. If closures were required in order to move the staff to a single location for operations, the branch libraries would close first, Bay Farm Island then the West End. Circulation of materials (check in, out, and reshelving) are the number one priority; public computers and reliable WiFi; robust online resources, etc. Things that might wait could include programs (story times, classes, crafts, lectures, etc.); collection development (ordering, book processing), etc. I am NOT saying any of this will happen, we just want to be prepared. As we had planned our phased reopening in bringing staff back into the building, creating the curbside Library Takeout program, and slowly opening the doors, we will use our phased reopening plan almost in reverse as we scale back what we do. Better to be prepared and not use the plan than to have nothing in mind and scramble to take things away without thought.

Since our doors are still open we want people to come back to the library. To discover what we have to offer to them. This is the way. It began on January 3, all three Alameda Free Libraries began offering Star Wars Grogu (Baby Yoda) themed library cards (while the supply lasts).



These cards have the American Library Association READ poster format on the front and our library's barcode and logo on the back. They have already created quite a stir. The special edition card is free to new card holders, replacement cards are \$2.00. The intent is for people to come into the libraries to get the card so we are not mailing them nor creating new library accounts and dropping the cards off at alternate locations, such as the schools. This promotion was advertised on social media, the library web page, in the library newsletter, in the newsletter to the schools, and in my report to the City Manager for the City Council, as well as by word of mouth.



We had hoped to begin in-person children's programs when school started after the winter break but those plans are set aside until the surge subsides. Staff have identified a "Japanese-style Face Shield" that would allow the story reader to do story time, have their face/mouth visible to the audience and the design of the shield directs the breath of the wearer UP away from our young seated audience and it also allows the story reader to wear their glasses without them steaming up! Right after I learned about these from staff I saw a Polynesian dance team perform, it wasn't until I was looking closely at a picture I had taken to see that all the dancers were wearing these face shields and it didn't hamper their dancing at all! Library Staff had secured permission to use these prior to the holidays, we would put it on only during story time and replace their face covering immediately after. Now all is on hold.

Staff continues to be relatively good humored with library customers who do not wear their face coverings properly. It is a constant battle asking people to keep their nose and chins covered when in the building. Sometimes it becomes an argument and occasionally the customer will leave in a huff. Mask mandates will remain in place at least until the mid-February but the City never lifted the mask requirement in city buildings, so nothing has really changed here. All city staff, volunteers, and contractors who come in contact with staff or the public are required to be fully vaccinated. At this time

“fully vaccinated” means the two vaccine shots, boosters are not yet required but may be a little further down the road.

Library website team. Supervising Librarian Marlon Romero is re-convening our library website team. It's been a few years since we last revised our web page and we have been collecting comments for the bigger changes and have been tweaking for small changes as necessary. One of the biggest and best tweaks is the search box at the top of the page. Requests from the public had been to make the search box a catalog search because nearly every library has that as their library catalog so people coming to our page would instinctively use it as such. For YEARS we've been trying to get that search box to default to searching our library catalog. The Library website is a sub-site to the City's web page and we were told it was not possible but we kept at the Open Cities developers (and city representatives) to make the change. We were finally successful! If you go to the library webpage: www.alamedafree.org in the upper right corner you'll see a search box. Now that search defaults to the library catalog and you could chose the radio button to search the site. We have already been receiving positive feedback from the public. Other changes may be coming in the future.

Unspent Library Bond Funds. As the City transitions to the new Enterprise Resource Planning software, they had to consolidate funds and accounts and transfer the from the old system to the new Tyler Munis system. While working with accounts, Finance found that there were unspent Library Bond Funds! We thought those funds were long since spent and that line was zero but apparently there was still about \$600,000 in unspent funds! I mentioned these funds at the last meeting but the request for allocations had not been made to the City Council. Finance recommended using it all for the Internal Service Fund (ISF) but rather than use it all to off-set the general fund transfer for the Library's ISF in the new budget, the Library submitted some projects/expenses to use those funds and fully expend that fund. The drainage project at the Bay Farm Island Library was a lifesaver during that huge storm back in October, the library's share of the at project was \$70K; the Main Library LED lighting upgrade cost more than was originally budgeted so \$50K was appropriated to make the Library's operating budget whole again; the electrification project at the West End Library stalled because the City's funds for building projects/emergencies were spent ~ the replacement of the gas water heater and the sealing of the windows required \$25K to complete; converting some of the water fountains at the libraries to water bottle fill stations will cost \$25K; many of the table tops at the Main Library have offensive words and images carved into them so we would like to re-finish the table tops and add glass or Plexiglas to the tops, a project that would cost about \$40K; and the Library needs to get on a schedule to replace components in our underfloor HVAC system before they all fail so \$20K was set aside to begin that project. \$300K has been reserved for the future Seed & Tool Library at the Jean Sweeney Open Space and the remaining \$140K will be applied towards off-setting the Library's Internal Service Funds in the upcoming FY2022-23 budget cycle. All recommendations were accepted, approved and the funds allocated by the City Council at their December 7 meeting. Various projects are moving forward.

Access Key Card Project. This project is again on hold. Not in a bad way. The Library and the Police Department are the only two departments using this access card system and software. Although we have finally agreed to what would be printed on the cards, the library would have to purchase a special camera to work with this software. There is currently talk in the IT division of moving to a new software for access cards that would be more intuitive to use and not require special equipment to produce cards. So, since the library staff are fine with the cards as they are, we are not spending more time and money on this project until the City decides on the new software and what support that new system requires.

Electrifying the West End Library. The West End HVAC install of the furnace and air conditioning unit is complete. 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. The replacement of the gas water heater and sealing the windows (so they would no longer open) was put on hold because the project ran out of funding due to building emergencies at other facilities. Additional funding to complete the project was allocated at the December 7 City Council meeting and now we are just waiting for the outside contractor to do the work. The City Public Works Department is project managing this project. The program to talk about the electrification project has been rescheduled to sometime in January 2022.

American Red Cross Blood Drives. The Library's next quarterly Red Cross Blood Drive is Thursday, January 6. The Blood Drive donors will enter and exit through the front doors with the rest of our public. We are almost fully booked for the Blood Drive. (They had to switch us off of our "regular" Tuesday because they gave that day to another organization!! We've only been hosting for about 7 years...)

American Rescue Plan Funding. The City Council approved the recommendation to allocate some of the ARPA monies to several projects including the Library Hot Spot Lending Program. There was a lot of support for the Library's request to spend \$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 and procedures work and give additional 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 to borrow one (place a hold). If they are kept out way overdue, we will have the capability to shut off the hot spot and a replacement would be provided by our vendor. If the contract, packaging/cataloging, and lending procedures progress on our projected timeline, we hope to be able to offer this program to the public sometime in March 2022.

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. Very slight set-back. We finally had some interviews with two people who were initially reluctant set up in January but because of the Covid-19 surge, they have been postponed to February or maybe March. We have six more interviews set up in February. I am still 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. Their piece looks good, we are waiting for approval from the City Attorney's office.

Japantown Historical Markers. Another project that is inching along. The associated Island City Waterways Art Walk produced by Rhythmix Cultural Works was a wonderful, joyous event. Rhythmix just finished editing their video of the event, here is the link.. Our Tonarigumi Marker project is mentioned at the end. <https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/2daOCM8xo6fXBo8iwSdFu?domain=youtu.be> We are targeting completion of all four markers in the spring of 2022.

Volunteers: All volunteer activities are basically put on hold since the omicron variant-driven surge after the holidays seems really contagious. The café, bookstore, story time visits to HeadStart, and information desk are all on hold for now. Once things stabilize more and we have a better sense of what

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direction the County Health department and the City's direction is, we'll know more and be in touch with our volunteers.

Friends of the Library. The Friends have been working hard! Their "Friends @ Home" virtual events in 2021 totaled 3,761 attendees! They hosted 26 author or art docent events over the year and they are so pleased with the results that they are going to continue the virtual events. AND of those events that allowed video, their YouTube channel has captured 3,032 views of their events over the year!

Dewey's Friends Café was targeting January 18 (after the Martin Luther King Jr Holiday) to reopen. The volunteers were very excited to reopen but the surge in the Omicron variant has postponed the re-opening. The new re-opening date is Monday, February 7. At this point they are only going to be open Monday-Friday from noon to 4:00PM. The Café Volunteers will have to be responsible for reminding people to put their masks on before returning into the library, and to keep their masks on if they are just "hanging out" in the café space. We will discuss the status of the virus again in late January to decide if the date needs to be pushed back again or not. The café will take their direction from the library.

The Friends are so close to opening their, yet unnamed, Mini Used Book Store in their sorting room space at the Main Library. Originally scheduled to open in mid-January, their grand opening has also been pushed back to February 10. They plan to only be open three days a week until they get more volunteers and sort out their processes. Their hours are going to be Thursday-Saturday from noon to 4:00PM. They have purchased and installed their own shelving in the sorting room for the bookstore and they will also continue to use the space for sorting donations. They are not yet ready to start accepting donations of materials but are getting close. They do plan on host three genre book sales in the Stafford Room on the following Saturdays from noon to 4:00PM March 12; April 9; June 4. These genre sales will hopefully help them reduce their inventory that has been in storage for over two years.

The Live @ the Library Concert series still hopes to return, we just don't know when. All January and February dates are now off the table. The primary organizer wants the occupancy restriction lifted before we have our first concert. I am doubtful that we will have a concert series before the fall season. More news as it comes.

The next Friends Board meeting will be on Monday, January 24, 2022 via Zoom at 6:30 p.m. The Friends have decided to continue the Zoom format for their Board meetings for now. If you would like to attend their virtual meeting, you may contact Friends Secretary David Beall at bealld@alamedafriends.com and he will send you the zoom link for the meeting.

Alameda Reads. The pandemic has been disruptive to the Alameda Reads program, Barb says they are changing their 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. The program office is open to the public to: Monday – Thursday, 10:00aAM to 2:00PM. They were closed for two weeks at the end of December for the holidays.

Just for Fun. The City hosted an Employee Holiday Party with the theme of "Reindeer Games." Several games were set up on two floors of City Hall so give some spacing for employees to move around. There was a spin of the prize wheel, a cake walk, guess the number of jelly beans in the jar, and a favorite pet

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photo contest. Staff enjoyed themselves, city hall closes for the party and I'm considering doing the same next year so staff can attend (right now the staff at the neighborhood libraries cannot come up because by the time someone gets there to cover and the staff members come up to city hall, the party is mostly over.) Several staff members submitted pictures of their pets, I think there were 50 or more entries, mostly really cute dogs, a few cats, one fish, and someone submitted a picture of people?!? Naturally, I had to submit a picture of my Cooper and to my great surprise he won! He won a trophy and is supposed to be featured on the City's social media but I haven't seen that yet. He's always a star in my eyes! Here's his submission to contest and his trophy for being cute!



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