

2024 Annual Report, Contra Costa County Library Commission

Introduction

This report captures the activity of the Contra Costa County Library Commission over the past 12 months. The Library Commission, a citizen advisory body to the Board of Supervisors and the County Librarian, provides a community perspective to library policy and administration.

The Library Commission drafted a 2024 annual work plan with goals to support library services and funding, community engagement, and system collaboration. The workplan goals are to:

1. Help support sustainable funding and support library programs and services to better serve all segments of our patrons,
2. Collaborate with elected officials, community groups and residents to engender broad support for the library,
3. Work on important issues that affect the library system or that can be assisted by the resources that the library system can provide to the community,
4. Serve as an advisory committee to the County on library issues.

The detailed description of the work toward these four goals are discussed herein.

About the Commission

The Contra Costa Library Commission is a citizen advisory body to the Board of Supervisors and the County Librarian, appointed by local public officials:

- Eighteen members representing the cities/towns in Contra Costa County - these Commissioners are appointed by the city/town councils (excluding Richmond)
- Five members representing Contra Costa County - each Supervisor appoints one Commissioner
- One member representing the Central Labor Council
- Four Ex-Officio members representing the College District, East Bay Leadership Council, Office of Education, and the Friends Council.

The Commission meets six times a year and receives reports on library policy, administration, and operations prepared under the supervision of the County Librarian. The Commission asks questions, offers comments, and provides feedback. Additionally, individual commissioners engage with local policy makers, community groups, and patrons to support and promote their local libraries. Annually, the Commission submits a report of its activities to the Board of Supervisors and other appointing authorities

Activity Report

The activities listed in this annual report follow the goals of the Commission's work plan, submitted with last year's annual report.

Goal 1: Help support sustainable funding and support library programs and services to better serve all segments of our patrons.

In March 2024, the Commission formed an Ad Hoc Advocacy Sub-Committee. The focus of this committee is to research and compare service schedules and funding methods for other library systems in the Bay Area. The committee's findings were presented at the Friends, Foundation and Commissioners Annual Meeting on October 5th. The Sub-Committee found that to provide equitable and impactful service for all communities served by the Contra Costa Library, additional funding

is necessary. This critical issue has been addressed in the past. Between 1990 and 2000 four ballot measures for the Contra Costa Library, two for parcel taxes and two for sales taxes, failed to pass at the required 66 2/3 approval threshold but achieved over 60% approval in each case. Further investigation needs to be undertaken to determine the pros and cons of developing different types of ballot measures.

Goal 2: Collaborate with elected officials, community groups and residents to engender broad support for the library.

The Commission's Legislative Working Group reviews legislation and other issues that affect our libraries for awareness and advocacy, consistent with and aligned to the Board of Supervisor's policy and positions.

This year, the Legislative Working Group tracked state and federal legislation impacting library funding, including the proposed budget impact of pulling back state General Fund support for Local Library Infrastructure. Of special concern was whether the \$10M that the Library received from the State for the new Bay Point Library was in jeopardy. This led to petitioning Assemblymember Grayson (District 15) and State Senator Glazier (District 07) to ask them for support for state earmarks for the Bay Point library, as well as State Senator Skinner (District 09) who is chair of the Budget Committee. A growing concern of the commission is the trend of censorship in public libraries and schools. The Commission has monitored the progress of AB 1825, the Freedom to Read Act and other local activities restricting access to books.

Individual Commissioners inform their appointing authority of library related legislative issues, usually through the public meeting process. Commissioners ensure that issues involving libraries get the appropriate input of the local community and government. Commissioners also reach

out to the candidates for city and town councils offering information about library needs.

Commissioners engage with local library staff and community groups to support and promote library programs. Engagement and advocacy by individual commissions include:

- Commissioner Ferree, the Clayton Community Library Foundation (CCLF), and branch library personnel in March presented and distributed an annual report to any interested community members and the Clayton City Council. The CCLF also participated in the city 4th of July parade and two citywide cleanups which included the library building and landscape. They continue to work with city personnel to address some needed cleaning and maintenance within and directly outside the library. Additionally, CCLF is working with the Clayton City Manager, City Council, and County Librarian to partner on a library refresh utilizing some of the livable trust funds awarded from former Supervisor Karen Mitchoff in 2022, CCLF funds, and community fundraising.
- Commissioner Hoisington spoke to the Lafayette City Council requesting their support of 56 hrs./week. She attended the City Council Meeting to support Lafayette Librarian Rob Tygett in his presentation for Library Week and to welcome new Lafayette Library Foundation Director Carol Varney.
- Commissioner DeFraga Acted as a liaison between a local business and the Library to ensure the donation of prizes for the Library's Summer Reading program. He also met with City Councilmembers to advocate for the Library and explore the possibility of funding for increased open hours. He helped organize and staff the Friends of the Martinez Library booth at the Martinez Farmer's Market on several occasions to perform outreach for the Library.

- Commissioner Dozier met a few times with the Pleasant Hill Library Manager, Patrick Remer, to get a report on the library's concerns, goals, and accomplishments. She attended quarterly Friends of the Pleasant Hill Library board meetings to give an update to that group on what was discussed at the library commission meetings and attended the opening of the new Book Friends bookstore in Walnut Creek.

Goal 3: Work on important issues that affect the library system or that can be assisted by the resources that the library system can provide to the community.

The Commission continues to support local branch librarians and the County Librarian to promote programming and resources available to the community. As a part of this effort, Commissioners, Library Friends, and Foundation members held their annual forum. The agenda featured welcoming remarks from Supervisor Ken Carlson, information on Library funding and previous failed library funding ballot measures, and an advocacy workshop led by Deborah Doyle of the Sonoma County Library Commission and Susan Hildreth, former California State Librarian and current Contra Costa Library Commissioner.

Goal 4: Serve as an advisory committee to the County on library issues.

At each meeting, the Commission receives reports from the County Librarian and staff on policy, plans and operations. In these presentations, Commissioners pose questions and provide input. An ongoing concern is library access, specifically service hours. Since the COVID 19 pandemic, no county library has been open on Sundays. The County Librarian briefed the Commission on the plans for the Self - Service Sunday pilot including location (Concord Library), hours (12-4PM), patron eligibility (library card holders over 18 years old in good standing), and services available (browsing collections, self-service book check out, using wi-fi). The pilot will launch in December 2024.

Summary

Over the past 12 months, the Contra Costa County Library Commission has supported library funding through the establishment of the Library Foundation, advocated with State and local policy makers for legislative and financial support, liaised with branch libraries and community groups to develop and promote services and programming, and provided input on Library strategic planning and operations. The Commission continues to serve as a bridge between branch libraries, citizen groups, policy makers, and patrons to secure funding, increase access, and uphold the community value of the Contra Costa County Library System.

Work Plan, Contra Costa County Library Commission (November 2024 through October 2025)

The Contra Costa County Library Commission was established by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors in March 1991. The Commission was created to serve in an advisory capacity to the Board of Supervisors and the County Librarian. The purposes of the Commission, according to its bylaws, are to:

- "Serve in an advisory capacity to the Board and County Librarian;
- "Provide community linkage to the County Library including, but not limited to, providing regular reports of the activities of the Commission to appointing authorities;
- "Serve as a forum for the community to express its views regarding the goals and operations of the County Library;
- "Assist the Board and the County Librarian in providing library services based on assessed public need; and
- "Develop and recommend proposals to the Board and the County Librarian for the betterment of the County Library, including, but not limited to, such efforts as insuring a stable and adequate funding level for the libraries in the County."

The bylaws also set forth specific advisory functions, denominated as duties:

- "Participate in the planning process, including the library element of the County General Plan and the Library Strategic Plan;
- "Assist in the review of County Library policies that the Commission and the County Librarian determine will improve the operations of the County Library and service to the public;
- "Perform such other tasks and undertake such other assignments as may from time to time be referred to the Commission by the Board or the County Librarian;
- "Provide reports to the Board and the County Librarian when the Commission deems such reports to be timely and appropriate."

Annually, the Commission sends a work plan to the Board of Supervisors, city and town councils, and other appointing authorities of its planned activities.

Goal 1: Help establish sustainable funding and support for library programs and services to better serve all segments of our patrons, including:

- Exploring ways of ensuring stable, equitable, and adequate public and private funding for the county library and its various branches.
- Advocating for additional funding for branch libraries for Increased resources to better serve their local communities.

- Providing input to the county and county librarian on budgetary issues and items.

Goal 2: Collaborate with elected officials, community groups, and residents to engender broad support for the Library, including:

- Conducting legislative outreach at the local, state, and federal levels to advocate for libraries, the services they provide, and the allocation of resources to them. When possible, meet with legislative leaders in conjunction with other library districts.
- Taking an active role in the American Library Association and California Library Association lobbying efforts.
- Briefing appointing authorities (city/town council, Supervisor, board, or agency) periodically on Commission activities, initiatives, and library needs and seeking their advocacy or endorsement.
- Collaborating with library staff to promote library activities and services with public officials at the federal, state, and local level.
- Educating organizations and individuals at the local, county, state and national level about the value and services offered by the library.
- Involving the local communities in Library Commission meetings.
- Encouraging collaboration between the Library Foundation of Contra Costa, community library friends and foundation groups, and commissioners by convening the Friends and Foundation Council and holding the annual Friends and Foundations Forum.

Goal 3: Advise the County on library issues, including:

- Understanding the needs, resources, and organizations of the local community.
- Providing thoughtful, consistent, sound and prompt advice and counsel to the County Librarian regarding the Library's budget, the strategic plan, changes in policy impacting service and programs, and any other matters raised.