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# AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** Sabrina B. Landreth  
City Administrator

**FROM:** Jamie Turbak  
Interim Director of Library  
Services

**SUBJECT:** OPL Procedures for Removing Books

**DATE:** October 9, 2018

City Administrator Approval

Date:

10/11/18

## RECOMMENDATION

**Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report On General Library Procedures For Removing Books From The Oakland Public Library (OPL) Collection, Including Responding To Recent Issues Regarding Numerous Rare African American-Oriented Books Being Discarded.**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 26, 2018, a report was presented to the Life Enrichment Committee that provided an explanation of the Oakland Public Library ("OPL" or "Library") Collection Development Policy, the process for removing books, and a summary of books withdrawn from the collections during a one (1) year period between May 1, 2017 and April 30, 2018, at the César Chávez, Elmhurst and West Branch Libraries. Since the time of this initial report, OPL has taken several steps to address concerns raised about the repurposing and tracking of withdrawn books.

## BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

On May 10, 2018, the Rules and Legislation Committee scheduled an "Informational report from the City Administrator on 1) The status of hiring and programming at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland (AAMLO), and; 2) General Library Procedures for removing books from the Oakland Public Library collection, including responding to recent issues regarding numerous rare African American-oriented books being discarded", as requested by Councilmembers Kaplan and Gibson McElhaney. Staff prepared and presented this report to the Life Enrichment Committee on June 26, 2018. The item was discussed and continued to a future date. On September 13, 2018, the Rules and Legislation Committee separated the two requested items of the report presented on June 26, 2018 and requested that an update be provided on the second portion of the bifurcated item.

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## **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

The Oakland Public Library collection is comprised of nearly 1.2 million items of which 880,000 are print books. The Library spends approximately \$872,000 per year on the purchase of over 26,000 print books. To accommodate space for new material, books are withdrawn by librarians when they are in unacceptable physical condition, inaccurate, dated/superseded or when they have not been used by patrons for a period of time (generally over one year). Books are also removed by patrons through loss, theft, accident or failure to return the item.

Withdrawn books are donated to "Friends of the Library" organizations per Oakland City Council Resolution No. 74175 C.M.S., which authorizes the disposal of surplus city property<sup>1</sup>. These books are repurposed by "Friends" groups for community use in the following ways:

- Free giveaways at library branches and community events
- Book sales with proceeds going to OPL "Friends of the Library" organizations
- Provided to schools, day care centers and teachers
- Donated to:
  - Hospitals and waiting rooms
  - Art/craft organizations
  - Nonprofit organizations
  - Library and community programs, such as Communities of Oakland Respond to Emergencies (CORE) Program and National Night Out

Over the past several months, community stakeholders have expressed concern about what happens to withdrawn books and indicated a desire to have them repurposed by the Oakland community, especially children's books. The Library has designed better signage for its branches indicating such books are available. Oakland Public Library now has contact information on the library's website to make requests for withdrawn and/or donated books, so that the Library can notify teachers or organizations when withdrawn books become available.

Another issue raised during this process was that the Library could not tell which books were withdrawn by librarians and which were removed by patrons through loss, theft, accident or failure to return the item. To address this concern, OPL implemented an electronic tag that will allow the Library to track which books are withdrawn by staff versus those removed by the public.

Two other initiatives may increase collection activity and decrease the number of books being withdrawn due to lack of circulation. The first is a request to eliminate overdue fines for adults to build on a successful initiative approved by City Council in July 2016 that removed overdue fines for youth. Research by the American Library Association found that overdue fines disproportionately impact low-income populations and that removing this barrier increases the number of library books that are checked out. The second is expanded service funded by the passage of Measure D that will provide an increase in the number of open hours for libraries across the city, including a sixth day, estimated to start early 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Only damaged books, such as those with missing pages, stains or mold are thrown away.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

This is an informational report with no fiscal impact.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

No outreach was deemed necessary for this informational report beyond the standard City Council agenda noticing procedures.

**COORDINATION**

No other City departments were involved in the writing of this informational report.

**SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

***Economic:*** No specific, additional economic opportunities have been identified.

***Environmental:*** No specific, additional environmental opportunities have been identified.

***Social Equity:*** The materials and services of the Oakland Public Library are available at no charge to all residents of all ages and races to acquire knowledge and develop skills they need towards equity in educational, employment, housing, entertainment and engagement opportunities.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report On General Library Procedures For Removing Books From The Oakland Public Library (OPL) Collection, Including Responding To Recent Issues Regarding Numerous Rare African American-Oriented Books Being Discarded.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Jamie Turbak, Interim Library Director, at 510-238-6610.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Jamie Turbak  
Interim Director of Library Services

Item: \_\_\_\_\_  
Life Enrichment Committee  
October 23, 2018