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MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR &
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jamie Turbak
Director, Oakland Public
Library

SUBJECT: Library Advisory Commission
Annual Report to the Oakland City
Council 2021-2022

DATE: May 19, 2022

City Administrator
Approval

Date: May 26, 2022

INFORMATION

The attached informational report (**Attachment A**) provides the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Oakland Library Advisory Commission (LAC), including a detailed summary of LAC activities, progress towards achieving strategic goals. It also includes recommendations to the Oakland City Council regarding critical investments, planning, advocacy and other forms of ongoing assistance to support the LAC.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Turbak
Director, Oakland Public Library

For questions, please contact Jamie Turbak, Director, at 510-238-6610.

Attachments (1)

A: Library Advisory Commission Annual Informational Report

Attachment A: Library Advisory Commission Annual Report 2021-2022

Introduction

In addition to providing citizen oversight of Measure Q and Measure D funding, the City of Oakland's Library Advisory Commission (LAC) is dedicated to supporting the Oakland Public Library's (OPL) active and vital role as an integral part of Oakland through advocating for and publicizing the programs, outreach and activities of its 18 locations. Serving as an open liaison between the Library Administration, the Mayor and City Council, and the citizens of Oakland, the LAC both supports existing library programs and, as required by Ordinance No. 8064 C.M.S which established the Library Advisory Commission in 1969, "integrate[s] the activities of the commission with the City's overall goals and objectives."

In 2018, the Library Advisory Commission created a Strategic Plan which clarified its goals and its ongoing committee structures. This year, we significantly revised it to align with new challenges and opportunities facing the Commission and OPL as our city continues to evolve. The two standing committees are a Sustainability Committee (dedicated to overseeing the timing and strategy of ballot measures and other funding structures, maintaining oversight of the OPL Library budget and leading efforts in the LAC communication with elected officials) and a Community Engagement Committee (previously named 'Outreach Committee,' whose focus is to lead relationship-building with other advocacy groups, manage public messaging (including social media and public events) and educate the public at large about OPL services and programs.) Together, while adding additional ad hoc committees as needed, the LAC works towards these strategic goals:

GOAL 1: Establish long-term financial sustainability for Oakland Public Library.

GOAL 2: Increase public awareness of Oakland Public Library's financial situation, need for a new Main Library, programs and services.

GOAL 3: Plan and advocate for expansion of the library system and services.

GOAL 4: Maintain LAC infrastructure to sustain a robust commission.

This report will discuss how the Commission has fulfilled its roles from our last report to the Life Enrichment Committee (LEC) in 2021. As we continued to conduct our business virtually after the shelter-in-place orders halted in-person meetings, our 2021-2022 accomplishments also demonstrate how the LAC met and exceeded expectations as we navigate the late stage of the pandemic. In group and individual capacities as Commissioners, we continued to support, represent, and raise awareness of the needs of Oakland's branch libraries, library system and neighborhoods in our continuing advocacy.

Long-Term Financial Stability

As set out in our authorizing ordinance, the LAC continues to be focused on the sustainable and responsible expenditure of taxpayer dollars. We express our gratitude for the Council's endorsement of Measure C. The LAC also provided formal suggestions for the final language of Measure C concerning increasing the amount of support from the General Fund, which we were glad to see reflected in the ballot measure adopted by Council. While we saw positive

developments in long term financial sustainability, we want to outline some areas where future assistance from the City Council would be greatly appreciated.

In last year's report to the LEC, we raised concerns on funding provided to the Public Works Department for the purpose of maintaining OPL facilities. While we have been grateful for their department leadership's willingness to discuss the OPL maintenance backlog, we have continued to notice a shortage of custodial staff and a delay in upkeep. We believe this is related to a shortage of staff and resources in the Public Works Department, and we ask that the City Council provide adequate funding to the Public Works Department for them to fully staff library maintenance. The LAC is concerned that the uneven quality of library maintenance has a significant negative impact on the client experience and saps public confidence in OPL. Oakland residents deserve a library system that has working bathrooms at every location, is free from pest control problems, and that is cleaned on a regular basis. These maintenance issues are a particular concern as we look forward to a likely Measure C renewal in 2022.

We have also made progress in obtaining access to outstanding and closed tickets for OPL service requests from Public Works. The LAC's Sustainability Subcommittee began working with OPL staff to review and recommend metrics based off this data to create a quality bar for OPL patrons (e.g., the ratio of open to closed tickets from the past year, breakdowns of different ticket types, average time to resolution, etc.). We have been actively involved in monitoring the multiple hiring delays for open custodial positions that would service the OPL system. Part of this work has been inviting representatives from the Department of Public Works to our meeting to discuss the situation. We ask that Council not only provide adequate funding, but also work to find HR solutions for efficient hiring of custodial staff so we do not lose qualified applicants due to an elongated timeline and library maintenance does not continue to fall below the quality bar.

The Sustainability Subcommittee has also begun putting together a survey for residents to administer to assess the quality of their libraries in terms of maintenance. This was inspired by our ongoing conversations with advocacy groups for the City of Oakland's Parks and Recreation Department, who created a similar survey to assess public perception of maintenance. By doing this report, we plan to help establish a baseline metric for what OPL patrons currently expect and how far we are from meeting those expectations. We hope to share the findings with the LEC and Council more broadly in the next year for the next report.

City-Wide Advocacy and Vision

Our ongoing recruitment of diverse members has resulted in a Commission with a remarkable range of life experiences, representing 6 out of 7 Council Districts in Oakland. We are still working to gain District 6 representation on the Commission. More broadly, we have happily managed to maintain a mix of race, age, gender, sexual orientation and personal experience that reflects the diversity of Oakland. At the same time, the Commission is facing a challenge where most of our serving members are in their second term. Thus, we would appreciate Council's help in encouraging members of the public to apply to the Commission.

To bolster our ongoing desire for diverse representation and ensure that branch libraries without the support of a branch Friends group have equitable advocacy, our current group of Commissioners have continued to volunteer to monitor and advocate for individual branches, in addition to working on system-wide goals.

Civic Engagement

Despite the challenges associated with the pandemic, the LAC has continued to make communication and civic engagement a priority in its work. In our ongoing branch-specific advocacy, Commissioners engage with Oakland's communities in discussions about library services and needs. From our annual OPL Advocates Holiday Mixer for library supporters each December, to our presence at in-person and online library events from movie screenings to author events, festivals to poetry competitions, we represent the city and its libraries. By training advocates to support the library, we hope to create a pool of civically engaged representatives who will promote the Library in a diversity of ways.

Due to the ongoing nature of the pandemic, we continued last year's tradition of making the Library's annual mixer to a virtual public event. We were grateful to have 104 registrants and over 50% attendance for the event, including Councilmember Kalb and Mayor Schaaf. The signups for the 2021 mixer exceeded those for 2020. The mixer was held in partnership with the Friends of the Oakland Public Library, an organization our Commissioners speak with on a monthly basis to keep each other informed of our work. To better maintain connections with the full spectrum of library supporters and stakeholders, the LAC completed a relationship mapping project and will keep it as a living document as new stakeholders come into our purview.

Some OPL highlights from the 2020-2021

- 402,768 library card holders
- 35,488 visits (low number due to Covid)
- 1,049,048 physical items in the collection
- 1,187,504 e-items in the collection
- 82,997 non-English language items checked out
- 1,289,000 physical items checked out
- 1,158,836 e-content checked out
- 108 in-person programs (low number due to Covid)
- 2,906 attendees to in-person programs (low number due to Covid)
- 30,104 views of recorded online program content
- 8,696 in-house computer sessions
- 11,464 in-house sessions of wi-fi
- 1,405,324 website visits

In summary, the City of Oakland's Library Advisory Commission was able to realize many of its goals this year. We oversaw the financials regarding Measures Q and D, advocated for Oakland Public Library, and worked with City elected officials, City Administration and the public to help the Oakland Public Library fulfill its mission -to empower people of all ages to discover new worlds, meet their neighbors and develop into their very best selves.

