



CITY OF OAKLAND

AGENDA REPORT

TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Jamie Turbak
Director of Library Services

SUBJECT: 2024 Library Commission Annual
Report

DATE: 2024

City Administrator Approval

Date:

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That [The City Council Receive An Informational Report From The Oakland Public Library Commission \(LC\) For Fiscal Year 2023-2024.](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Library Parcel Taxes Audit

On June 13, 2024, a required audit of the Library Parcel Taxes for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 through FY 2022-23 was made available to the LC. The audit findings were that the library spending of Measure Q, D, and C proceeds were in accordance with their respective requirements, there were no significant issues with the Measure Q reserve fund requirement, and the City had implemented the previous audit recommendations. However, the LC is concerned with the finding that the City fell short of the required General Fund appropriation requirement by \$62,000 in FY 2022-23, the first year of Measure C.

Library Funding in the Oakland Budget

Prior to the city's adoption of the 2024-2025 midcycle budget, Library Commissioners met with the Mayor and Councilmembers, to advocate for their continued support of the Oakland Public Library during the upcoming budget review. While Council was able to pass a budget that preserved library staffing and operating hours, the LC has serious concerns about the allocation of restricted funds in the 2024-2025 budget amendment approved on July 2, as well as a proposal by the City Administrator to use Measure C and D reserve funds to close an operating deficit for 2023-2024. It is the position of the LC that both of these decisions may endanger the ability of the City to sustain Library funding in the long term.

Structure of the Library Commission

The LC has 15 seats, of which 14 are currently filled (one in holdover status). Three seats will be vacant by the end of 2024. While the LC prioritizes candidates that meet our objective of proportional representation by Council District, there are currently no members residing in D2 or D5. Ordinance 13757--adopted by Council in 2023--allows for Councilmembers to nominate candidates for the Commission, and the LC encourages Councilmembers to nominate residents from underrepresented districts to serve on the Commission.

Life Enrichment Committee
date, 2024

As required by aforementioned Ordinance, the LC also has two standing committees, the Sustainability Committee, which oversees the effective delivery of library services, and the Community Engagement Committee, which maintains strategic lines of communication between the OPL and the Oakland community. Following Oakland's ending of the COVID State of Emergency declaration in 2023, the resumption of in-person meeting requirements impeded the operations of the Community Engagement Committee.

Commission Activities

Since the last LC report to the Life Enrichment Committee, the Commission has created and adopted new Bylaws, developed a Patron Experience survey, started development of a new Action Plan, increased monitoring of open maintenance requests, and initiated a new Mentorship program. The LC also received an update from the OPL Racial Equity Team in 2024, and will be incorporating Racial Equity goals appropriately into the survey and into the Action Plan.

As was the case at the time of our last update, Commissioners regularly visit branches, meet with community advocates, monitor library funds appropriations and usage, and look for new opportunities to support our Libraries.

OPL Developments of Interest to the Commission

In support of the LC's Sustainability and Community Engagement goals, Commissioners continuously engage with community advocacy groups and provide updates and/or request the Library Director provide updates on various OPL initiatives. These include; Feasibility Studies for the Main Library and Piedmont as well as a proposed Hoover Durant Branch; Capital Improvements at AAMLO, Main, Brookfield, Elmhurst, and Melrose; specific library concerns brought to commissioners; and the hiring of a new Library Safety Manager in 2024.

Library Usage

In addition to maintenance reports, the LC tracks OPL visits and other statistics to ensure that Library resources are fully utilized, and that all Oakland residents have access to a safe, pleasant, welcoming and inclusive environment in our Libraries. The LC is pleased to note that in-person visits, print-media loans, and in-person programs have mostly recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

LIBRARY PARCEL TAXES AUDIT

On June 13, 2024, the City Auditor issued the audit of Library Parcel Taxes for FY 2019-20 through FY 2022-23. The scope of the audit included Measure Q proceeds from FY 2019-20 through FY 2021-22, Measure C proceeds for FY 2022-23, and Measure D proceeds from FY 2019-20 through FY 2022-23.

The objectives of the audit were to determine whether 1) the Library spent tax proceeds as intended by the respective measures, 2) the City met the minimum General Fund appropriation requirement, 3) the Library met the Reserve fund requirement for Measure Q, and 4) the Library implemented the previous audit recommendation.

As required (most recently) by City Ordinance No. 13757 C.M.S., the audit findings were presented to the LC for review on July 29, 2024.

The audit results found that

- The Library spent Measure Q, D, and C proceeds in accordance with their respective requirements.
- No significant issues with the Measure Q reserve fund requirement. The Library is required to reserve 5 percent of the previous year's revenue and deposit it into a separate reserve fund which may only be used with the City Council's approval.
- The City implemented the previous audit recommendation intended to provide the LC with additional financial reports to strengthen their oversight abilities.

However, the audit found the City did not meet Measure C requirements in two respects:

- The City fell short of Measure C's General Fund appropriation and exemption requirements for FY 2022-23. The City fell short of meeting the General Fund appropriation amount by approximately \$62,000 in FY 2022-23. The appropriation amount based on the level of General Fund support at the time the measure was passed is \$14,500,000. **This is concerning as according to Measure C, if the City fails to meet the minimum required General Fund appropriation, the special tax may not be collected. This poses a serious long-term risk to the sustainability of the OPL system.**
- The City mistakenly collected approximately \$112,000 in Measure C taxes from exempt property owners. This issue has been corrected as of March 2024.

Audit recommendations

- The City Administrator should validate the General fund appropriation shortfall with the Finance Department and consult with the City Attorney's Office to determine the appropriate course of remediation.
- To ensure timely and accurate processing of new parcel taxes, the City Administrator should create an administrative instruction to notify affected departments of approved ballot measures so staff can review and update procedures to reflect additional parcel tax exemptions, changes to the general fund appropriation, and other requirements before processing the new measures.

LIBRARY FUNDING IN THE OAKLAND BUDGET

Beginning in April of 2024 and through May-June of this year, Library Commissioners met with the Mayor and Councilmembers to request that the city not cut any Library services or staff during the upcoming 2024-2025 Midcycle Budget Review, and that it continue to meet its obligations under "The 2018 Oakland Public Library Preservation Act" (Measure D) and "The Library Services Retention and Enhancement Act of 1994" as reapproved in 2022 (Measure C). These measures require that the City appropriate \$12,992,267 and \$14,500,000 per year, respectively, exclusively for the Oakland Public Library. This requirement guarantees that Measure C and D funds are used only for Library operations, and never used to close structural deficits in the General Purpose Fund.

Commissioners also requested a preview of any proposed changes to the OPL Budget from the Mayor's office, but this was not provided. The information about proposed changes was provided to the public on May 23, but it was not clear where to find this information. LC requested and received an update from the City that outlined the specific proposed changes at the end of June. It was only then that it became clear to the LC that the City intended to reduce its legally required appropriations and use restricted Measure C and D reserves to close a deficit in the 2024-2025 budget.

It was also brought to the attention of the LC by a community advocacy organization, Friends of the Oakland Public Library, that the City Administrator presented an informational report on a Plan of Life Enrichment Committee date, 2024

Action to Close the FY 2023-2024 Operating Deficit. To the best of the understanding of the members of the LC, this plan does not require approval of the council. The proposed plan would take \$6,000,000 from measure C and D funds, and use it to partially fill the deficit. This decision was made and publicized only days before the end of the 2024 Fiscal Year.

Although Council adopted a measure on July 2 declaring a "Severe and Unanticipated Financial Event" in order to pass a budget that fell short on the Library fund appropriations required by Measures C and D, it is the position of the LC that the financial shortfall was or should have been anticipated with the increase of Federal interest rates in 2022. The declaration by the City does not obviate this fact. Such a declaration--not during a pandemic, natural disaster, or external crisis--constitutes a broken promise to the voters who enacted Measures C and D.

These budgetary decisions made by the City present two major risks to the long-term sustainability of the OPL system. The first is that--if found to have incorrectly declared a fiscal emergency--the City would be legally unable to collect Measure C and D funds until the Maintenance of Effort was restored. and the Measure D reserve restored and maintained at the level required by the measure. The second is that Oakland voters--having seen restricted Library funds used to fill a GPF Deficit--may refuse to pass such measures in the future when existing measures expire.

As such, the LC strongly urges the Council and the City of Oakland, to restore Library allocations in the GPF to the MOE required by law, and to return funds drawn from Measure C and D reserves to fill GPF deficits for 2023-2024.

STRUCTURE OF THE LIBRARY COMMISSION

The LC Bylaws and most recent Library Ordinance recommend that the 15-member Commission have two members from each Council District, as well as an at-large representative. The current by-district membership is as follows:

District	Commissioners
1	3
2	0
3	4
4	2
5	0
6	4
7	1
At-Large	0

Districts 2, 5, and 7 need Commissioners. Although Districts 1, 3 and 6 are over-represented on the LC, it should be noted that one Commissioner from each of these districts will be leaving the Commission by the end of the year.

Standing Committees

The two standing committees of the LC are the Sustainability Committee and the Community Engagement Committee.

The Sustainability Committee oversees the effective delivery of library services and tracks maintenance, staffing and interdepartmental issues that may impact library operations.

Maintenance issues are tracked through the Quarterly Maintenance Report, a document of all

Life Enrichment Committee
date, 2024

open outstanding service requests by library branch. This report is presented quarterly to all Commissioners, and it has been very helpful in highlighting outstanding issues at particular Branches. It serves as a starting point for discussions with branch managers and allows all Commissioners to advocate more effectively for the resolution of open requests. Here is the data for the table of total open service requests for the period of August 2022 through May 2, 2024

<i>Date</i>	<i>Open Service Requests</i>
Q4 2022	155
Q1 2023	178
Q2 2023	126
Q3 2023	172
Q4 2023	109
Q1 2024*	202
Q2 2024	---

* due to a reporting issue, Q1 2024 stats were updated on May 23, 2024.

LC members review open service requests quarterly, reach out to Branch Managers to confirm priority, and escalate concerns to OPL Administration and other members of City leadership when resolution of high-priority maintenance issues impacting Library operations are excessively delayed. If a particular branch is still experiencing major issues after such attempts, it is the policy of the LC co-chairs to include a report on that branch as a standing agenda item during every LC meeting, until the Commissioner assigned that branch has confirmed that the Branch Manager is satisfied with the safety, accessibility, and cleanliness at the branch.

In 2023, the Sustainability Committee began developing a survey to assess the library experience of patrons and staff to find possible areas of improvement to the patron experience. The Sustainability Committee then convened an ad-hoc committee to complete this work.

The Community Engagement Committee exists to develop and maintain strategic lines of communication between the OPL and the Oakland community, to lead LC advocacy on behalf of the OPL, and to educate Oakland residents about OPL services and programs.

Due to repeated lack of quorum, this committee was unable to meet for over a year between March of 2023 (when the Coronavirus Pandemic Emergency Declaration was ended) and May of 2024. The functioning of this committee has been severely hampered by statewide legal requirements mandating full in-person attendance at all standing committee meetings. While the LC was able to take steps to address the quorum issue at our March 2024 meeting, it should be noted that this issue would have been resolved more quickly given the option to hold virtual meetings. Attempts have been made at the State level to make this possible, but none have been successful thus far. This is an ongoing area of concern for the LC.

Since resuming meetings in May of 2024, the Community Engagement Committee has begun work on a communications advocacy plan for the 2025-2026 budget cycle, as well as a timeline for survey data collection, public outreach and other activities.

COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

The City of Oakland's Library Advisory Commission (LAC) was established in 1969 by Ordinance

No. 8064 C.M.S. Subsequent ordinances expanded the role of the LAC to provide citizen oversight of Measure Qⁱ (now Measure Cⁱ) and Measure Dⁱⁱ funds. Most recently, Ordinance No. 13757 C.M.S.--as enacted by City Council in July of 2023--changed the name of this body to the "Library Commission" (LC), while also affirming and expanding the role of the LC in providing oversight of library funds designated by voter-enacted measures.

The LC also supports the vital role of the Oakland Public Library in our community, by serving as an open liaison between Library Patrons, the Library Administration, the Mayor, and the City Council. To support this role, the LC receives regular informational reports from the OPL and other City Departments. Most recently, the LC received a presentation from the OPL Racial Equity Team and the OPL Chief Financial Officer.

In addition to the activities led by the two Standing Committees, as described in the prior section, every Commissioner is assigned to represent one or more OPL Branches, and to liaise with at least one Councilmember on behalf of their branches and the entire OPL system. Commissioners also maintain relationships with local "Library Friends" groups. In order to ensure that relationships and institutional knowledge are retained as the composition of the LC changes, the LC instituted an informal mentorship program in 2024.

The remainder of LC work is performed by ad-hoc committees.

Ad-Hoc Committees

The Bylaws ad-hoc Committee drafted the first-ever bylaws for the LC in 2023. The bylaws included, language to ensure proportional representation from all City Council districts and redefined quorum requirements to be based on the number of commissioners, rather than the number of seats on the commission. This has had the effect of reducing the number of meetings cancelled due to lack of quorum, but will not address quorum issues resulting from legally-mandated in-person requirements. The bylaws also clarified the roles and requirements of standing committees and ad-hoc committees, as well as the Chair and Vice-Chair positions. The bylaws were reviewed by the City Attorney's office and adopted by the LC at the June 2024 LC meeting.

The Survey ad-hoc Committee, convened by the Sustainability Committee, developed a Library Experience survey. The survey asks patrons and staff to rate their local branch on a 1-5 scale, on various metrics pertaining to safety, accessibility, organization, and other key indicators of patron experience. The survey is currently under review by the OPL Director. When it is finalized, data collection will be directed by the Community Engagement Committee.

The Action Plan ad-hoc Committee is in the process of reviewing and updating the 2021 Action Plan. Major updates to the plan include clarification of roles to align with the new bylaws, and incorporation of OPL Racial Equity goals into the LC's strategic plan.

OPL DEVELOPMENTS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMISSION

To support LC efforts to advocate for the continued sustainability and growth of the Oakland Public Library system, Commissioners track various initiatives by the City and Library advocacy groups.

Branch Feasibility Studies

The City and OPL have begun a feasibility study for the renovation, redevelopment or relocation of the Main Library. Additional feasibility studies are underway, led primarily by grassroots community advocacy organizations. Commissioners representing these groups provide regular updates to the LC and the OPL Director.

- **Main Library:** The City of Oakland and the Oakland Public Library launched "Reimagining a New Oakland Main Library"--a study of options for the renovation, redevelopment or relocation of the Oakland Main Library--in June of 2023. As of the date of this report, community engagement meetings have been completed, while online community surveys and social media campaigns are ongoing. This study will be completed in ____, and the next steps will be _____. The study was made possible by Measure KK funding and completed in collaboration with two community-focused architectural and planning partners, EHDD and blinkLAB! architecture.
- **Hoover Durant:** The Friends of the Hoover-Durant Public Library (FOHDPL), a California-registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is currently engaged in an ongoing feasibility study in collaboration with the City of Oakland, Department of Public Works, the Oakland Public Library, and blinkLAB! architecture. This study--which was also made possible with funding from Measure KK--aims to present to institutions, grant-funders and other stakeholders a pathway to bring back a library to the Hoover, McClymonds, Western Longfellow, Mosswood and Pill Hill communities in West Oakland. FOHDPL is a grassroots, volunteer-run nonprofit organization, vital to the culture, education and welfare of its diverse community. FOHDPL members are represented on the LC, providing critical advocacy for this project. *Add the timeframe for this study.*
- **Piedmont Avenue:** The Friends of the Piedmont Avenue Library--also a 501(c)(3) nonprofit--launched a feasibility study for a new Piedmont Avenue Branch in 2024. This study was also made possible with funding from Measure KK. in collaboration with the City of Oakland, the Oakland Public Library, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and HY Architects. The funding for this study was approved by the Oakland City Council in 2022. *Add timeframe for study*

Capital Improvements at Branch Libraries

There are many capital projects recently completed or underway at OPL due to decades of deferred maintenance. Despite being critical to the continued safe and effective operations of our libraries, most of these projects are reliant on external funding.

- **African American Museum & Library at Oakland (AAMLO):** Thanks to a \$1.69 million grant from the California State Library and matching funds from Measure KK, AAMLO will be able to make critical repairs and improvements. AAMLO is dedicated to the discovery, preservation, interpretation, and sharing of historical and cultural experiences of African Americans in California.
- **Brookfield:** this branch is about to undergo extensive critical maintenance work funded by a grant from the California State Library for \$2.15 million and matching funds from Measure KK.
- **Elmhurst:** Extensive upgrades were completed in 2023, funded by Measure KK. These included new floors, new paint indoors and outdoors, conversion to all-electric power (including a heat pump that also provides air conditioning), new flooring, and the addition of a gender-neutral restroom. With an additional grant from Sunlight Giving Foundation and matching funds from OPL, the backyard was also updated with a new shed, gazebo, tree and community garden.
- **Main Library Infrastructure Project:** While the feasibility study to completely reimagine

the Main Library is still in progress, the Main Library must still tackle critical urgent maintenance projects in 2024 to remain in operation. With a \$4.1 million grant from the California State Library and matching funds from Measure KK, the upcoming Main Library Infrastructure Project will improve electrical and data capacity, while also upgrading lighting, flooring, roofing, and energy efficiency.

- **Melrose: \$3.4 million grant**
Need details. Who's the point person for this?
- **Jaime will provide other capital improvement projects**

Temporary Library Closures

- **Main Library:** The Main Library will be closed to the public for five months, (June – early November 2024) to complete essential repairs and improvements designed to enhance the library’s facilities and provide a better experience for patrons. ,
- the Brookfield library is expected to close for _____ weeks/months during capital improvements.

New Role: Library Safety Manager

Due to ongoing safety concerns brought to the attention of OPL by Branch Managers and Patrons, OPL hired a Safety Manager in early 2024. The role of the Safety Manager will be to lead improvements OPL's security model and develop fair and equitable safety policies to ensure that Libraries are safe and welcoming for all community members.

LIBRARY USAGE

OPL Usage for the past five years

A total of _____ patrons visited the Oakland Public Library in FY 23-24, this is up/down from 1,259,286 patron visits in FY 22-23, see the table below. The LC is pleased to note that by FY 22-23, patron visits had recovered to 83% of pre-pandemic levels, print items borrowed were at 89%, and the number of programs offered at our libraries had increased by 11%. The use of e-materials jumped by 31% during the pandemic, and--after a brief drop in 2021-2022, is 55% higher than pre-pandemic levels. The use of Library computers has sustained a 41% decrease after the pandemic, and the LC is currently inquiring with branches to determine whether this is a result or reduced demand or reduced accessibility.

	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY22-23	FY23-24
Total Patron Visits	1,499,772	35,488	923,751	1,259,286	not ready
Physical Items in Collection	1,260,149	1,329,593	1,316,765	1,368,400	not ready
Print Items Borrowed	2,380,197	1,289,555	2,197,735	2,117,465	not ready
E-materials Borrowed	490,869	643,595	490,869	760,503	not ready
Number of Programs	4,549	108	4,549	5,064	not ready
Uses of Public Internet Computers	168,467	8,696	168,467	100,073	not ready
Virtual visits to Library Website	1,947,657	1,405,324	1,194,657	1,723,690	not ready

OPL Usage by Branch

Branch	FY 2022-2023		FY 2023-2024	
	Patron Visits	Print Items Borrowed	Patron Visits	Print Items Borrowed
81st		75,839		
	68,616			
AAMLO		46		
	8,400			
Asian		161,960		
	163,449			
Brookfield		16,163		
	31,469			
Chavez		67,793		
	51,060			
Dimond		329,870		
	113,325			
Eastmont		24,550		
	63,042			
Elmhurst		6,706		
	20,401			
Golden Gate		91,786		
	37,059			
Lakeview		120,316		
	72,713			
Main		349,905		
	201,468			
Melrose		35,943		
	25,800			
MLK		24,818		
	36,000			
Montclair		191,877		
	62,686			

Piedmont	95,514
27,600	
Rockridge	317,789
157,800	
Temescal	156,690
87,292	
West	49,900
31,106	
Total	2,117,465
1,259,286	

Not including the Main library, with the largest number of patron visits, patron visits were the highest at the Asian, Rockridge and Dimond branches, while patron visits were the lowest at the African American Museum & Library at Oakland (AAMLO), Elmhurst and Melrose branches. *Reasons for this to be described in more detail...*

In addition to its Main library, 16 neighborhood branches and African American Museum & Library at Oakland (AAMLO), the Oakland Public Library is expanding its effort to engage people in the community by making resources available online. The library provides free public access to technology - computers, high-speed Wi-Fi, hotspots, and laptops - to help bridge the digital divide. Additional facilities, programs and services for **FY 23-24** include:

- OPL Summer Lunch Program
- Bike Fix Clinic
- Second Start Literacy Program
- Teen Takeover
- Family, Toddler and Preschool Story Time
- Bilingual Story Time
- Infant and Child Play Groups
- Crafting and Maker Workshops for Adults, Children and Teens
- Bike Fix Clinic
- Seed and Tool Lending
- Business Assistance Workshops
- Interest-based social clubs
- STEM Workshops

The above list is only a small representative sample of community programs and services offered at Oakland Public Library branches. Many branches also provide free meeting spaces, shelter and cooling during heat waves and other adverse weather events, and serve as a hub for the dissemination of information and resources to the community. By serving as community hubs, Libraries are a critical lifeline for Oakland residents, the unhoused community, families, immigrants, teens, and seniors. Many recent and upcoming capital improvements also include resiliency measures such as backup power and solar arrays, allowing these branches to serve as Resilience Hubs. Given how our communities rely on OPL branches, it is critical that we ensure that the OPL system can not only continue to operate at current levels, but grow and change to meet the evolving needs of Oakland community.

Still trying to get stats for the following

- *Second Start Adult Literacy Program*
- *Tool Lending Library*
- *Bike Fix Clinic*
- *Seed Lending Library*
- *Summer free lunch program*

CONCLUSION

The City of Oakland's Library Commission exists to ensure Library Parcel Tax funds are collected and used in accordance with legal requirements, and to advocate for the continued flourishing of the Oakland Public Library system. While the LC was able to realize many of its responsibilities this year, and while we are pleased that the Library system will remain operational at expected levels through FY 2023-2025, we urge the City of Oakland and the City Council to consider the critical role that Libraries play in our community and take steps to ensure the long-term financial stability of the OPL system.

Appendix: Library Commission Rosters

Commissioners as of 6/30/2024
Mary Forte, Co-Chair
Gabrielle Sloane Law, Co-Chair

Chiye Azuma, Vice-Chair

Alternier Cook
Carolyn Moskovitz
Karen Roye
Cristina Tostado
Karen Zukor
Alex Weinberg
Brittany Buckmire
Bradley Boyd
Carolyn Jones
Elias Lawler
Anand Patel

The LC acknowledges and thanks the following individuals who ended their terms on the Commission since the previous report and a special acknowledgement to Caleb Smith for his hold over status for several months:

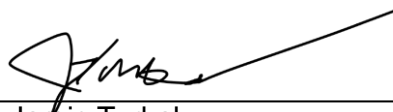
Cathy Smith
Ayushi Roy
Angelica Valentine
Caleb Smith

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff recommends that the City Council receive an informational report from the Oakland Public Library Commission, covering the period from June 2023 to June 2024.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Jamie Turbak
Director of Library Services

ⁱ Measure Q description