



San Francisco Public Library

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 18, 2022
To: San Francisco Library Commission
From: Michael Lambert, City Librarian
RE: Renewal of the Library Preservation Fund

The Office of the City Librarian has been working with the City Attorney to draft language for the proposed charter amendment to renew the Library Preservation Fund (LPF). We have attached that language for your review and possible approval at the April 21 Commission meeting.

Background

The Library Preservation Fund (Prop E) is a charter amendment which was originally approved by over 70% of San Francisco voters in June 1994. Following years of budget cuts, curtailed hours of operation, a meager book budget and threatened branch closures, the Friends of the San Francisco Public Library launched a ballot initiative for dedicated library funding. Prop E mandated a baseline budget equivalent to approximately 2% of the City's overall budget, plus a property tax set aside of two and one-half cents (\$0.025) for each one hundred dollars (\$100) assessed valuation. The Library would operate no fewer than 26 branch libraries, a Main Library, and a library facility for the blind, and maintain total annual service hours of at least 1,028 hours per week for the first 5 years of the legislation. Library Preservation Funds would be used to provide library services and materials and to operate library facilities. Priority was given through the legislation to increasing library hours throughout the system and acquiring books and materials. The legislation was effective through December 2009.

Friends led a second successful ballot effort in November 2007 to renew the Library Preservation Fund for an additional 15 years, garnering 74% of the vote (Prop D). The charter amendment continued the set aside from the annual tax levy, for a period of fifteen years starting with the fiscal year 2008-09 an amount equivalent to annual tax of two and one-half cents (\$0.025) for each one hundred dollars (\$100) assessed valuation. The charter amendment also continued the annual city appropriation such that the City maintains appropriations for the Library Department without reductions in any of the fifteen years with the base amount adjusted each fiscal year by the Controller's estimates. This renewal of the charter amendment included the authority for the Library Commission to request the issuance of revenue bonds or the incurrence of lease financing or other obligations, the proceeds of which to be used for the acquisition, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation and/or improvement of real property and/or facilities operated by the Library. The legislation is effective through June 2023.

Establishing Library Service Hours

Library hours of operation are set by the Library Commission. The charter amendment specifies the Library Commission may modify permanent service hours per week system-wide and at specific neighborhood branch libraries for succeeding five-year intervals, or at shorter intervals. Prior to setting service hours, the Library shall conduct at least one public hearing in each supervisorial district to receive and consider the public's comments about existing and potential Library service hours. Following the public hearings and comprehensive assessment of hours of operation, the Library Commission may modify the system-wide service hours for the next five-year interval.

Benefits of Library Preservation Fund (LPF)

Benefits of Prop E (1994)	Benefits of LPF Renewal (2007)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library weekly hours increased by 46% - from 801 to 1,172 • Branch hours increased by 47% - from 754 to 1,112 • All branches open on Saturdays • Professional librarians at every branch • Children's librarians at every branch • Sundays added at the Main Library and 7 branches • Books and materials budget increased from \$1 million to \$7.4 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-COVID, Library weekly hours increased to 1,462, 21% above charter mandate of 1,211 permanent service hours • Pre-COVID, all branches open on Sundays for seven-day service system-wide at all 28 locations • Branch Library Improvement Program (BLIP) was completed with renovation of 16 libraries and construction of 8 libraries, including addition of Mission Bay Branch Library to branch system. • San Francisco Public Library named National Library of the Year (2018) • San Francisco Public Library is the highest rated department of City government ever with overall satisfaction rating of A- from residents (2019) • Elimination of overdue fines (2019) • Capital projects for renovation of historic Mission Branch Library (\$25M) and Chinatown Branch Library (\$35M) are funded by LPF • Budget for a new Ocean View Branch Library is being funded by LPF

Comparison of LPF Renewal (2007) and Proposed Ballot Measure

1. Term: NEW – 25 years
2. Annual Property Tax Set-Aside and Annual City Appropriation: NEW
 - LPF Renewal (2007): remained status quo with original Prop E
 - *Nov. 2022 Measure: Allows the City to freeze the City's annual General Fund Baseline contribution to the Fund for any fiscal year after 2022-2023 at the prior year amount when the City's projected budget deficit for the upcoming fiscal year exceeds \$300 million. Following a funding freeze the General Fund Baseline will be restored over two fiscal years to what it would have been without the funding freeze.*
3. Spending Priorities: Hours, services, and collections remain top priority
 - Minimum Branches: SAME – Main + 27 branches
 - Minimum Hours: Increase
 - i. LPF Renewal: 1,211 per week
 - ii. Nov. 2022 Measure: 1,400 per week
4. Public Input to Modify System Hours: SAME – public hearing in each supervisorial district for every five years or more often
5. Use of Fund: SAME – any lawful purpose of the Library Department, including to “provide library services and to construct, maintain and operate library facilities.”
6. Authority to Use Annual Property Tax Set-Aside to Secure or Repay Library Debt: SAME
7. LPF Balance: SAME

Recommended Action

The action requested is a resolution urging the Board of Supervisors to submit to the voters a measure on the November 2022 ballot in substantially the same form as the attached language. After introduction at the Board of Supervisors, there would be a public process, including committee hearing, before the ballot measure could be submitted to the voters.

Library staff strongly supports the attached proposed ballot measure. It would allow the Library to both maintain and enhance the current level of service to the residents of the City and County of San Francisco.