

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 18, 2010

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER }  
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SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 22 :BACKGROUND AND ALTERNATIVES  
TO LIBRARY HOURS REDUCTIONS

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This memorandum is in response to Councilman Krupicka's request to know whether the Library considered having one or two late morning start times and later evening close times which would allow library customers an option to use the Library after work one or two days a week.

### **Background:**

On September 14, 2009, the Library Board met to discuss the list of possible budget reduction options provided by the Library Director. While many of these reductions were deemed "unpalatable," the Board discussed not only these but all of the available options that would meet the target given last summer of possibly reducing the Library's General Fund budget for FY2011 by \$470,810.

Recognizing the importance of libraries during tough economic times, the Library Board and the Director tried to avoid any further reduction of hours or closures. This was challenging since in FY2010, the Library increased library fines and fees, left vacant positions unfilled, eliminated the library security and cleaning contracts, reduced hours in Local History/Special Collections, and closed the Barrett Library on Sundays to meet the FY2010 reduction target of \$1,048,357.

On September 21, 2009, the Board voted unanimously to recommend a reduction of the Library budget by \$354,955, which included a reduction of operating hours in the three branches.

### **Discussion:**

The Library staff examined branch statistics and benchmarking data from the surrounding jurisdictions to aid in determining which hours to adjust. The factors that weighed most heavily on the possible scenarios were:

1. The fact that the Library needs to maintain a minimum of \$408,344 in vacancies to meet the budget commitments made for the FY2010 budget. Due to the number of vacancies, unfunded positions, expenditure reductions, and utility costs, the recommendation was to propose a single staff shift.

2. Usage statistics, such as monthly circulation, patron and meeting room use, computer utilization, children's programming, and hourly checkout were examined to help determine which hours would best serve the community. General Services was also contacted to determine utility cost savings. For consistency, and easy patron recall, all branch libraries were assigned the same hours of Monday-Thursday: 10am-7pm; Friday: 10am-6pm; Saturday: 10am-5pm.
3. Given the scope of the City, it was determined that having the Central library open each evening was a viable option for all residents since it was the only facility that could handle a large numbers of patrons using the computers, the meeting rooms, and library materials.

Library Usage November 2009

	<b>Barrett</b>	<b>Beatley</b>	<b>Burke</b>	<b>Duncan</b>
<b>Monthly Circulation Totals</b>	12,032	46,019	10,158	21,609
<b>Monthly Patron Use</b>	9,530	30,154	13,246	17,617
<b>Monthly Computer Use</b>	81%	84%	74%	68%
<b>% meeting room in use</b>				
9-1pm**	N/A	N/A	24%	38%
7-9pm	N/A	N/A	43%	31%
<b>Hourly checkout from 10am-1pm*</b>				
9-10am	474	1603	292	900
10-11am	1075	3037	585	1434
11-12 noon	1158	3399	761	2519
12-1pm	889	3086	796	1326
<b>Total from 10am-1pm</b>	<b>3596</b>	<b>11125</b>	<b>2434</b>	<b>6179</b>
<b>Hourly checkout from 7-9pm*</b>				
7-8pm	281	1928	540	882
8-9pm	263	1576	359	804
<b>Total from 7-9pm</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>3504</b>	<b>899</b>	<b>1686</b>

\* This figure includes renewals done remotely or by phone

\*\*AM meeting room use is primarily children's programs in branches

In benchmarking with surrounding jurisdictions, the Library was often told that while each of the County systems had a variety of hours, they received numerous complaints from their patrons because they could never remember when a particular branch was open on any given night.

The table below shows the current Library hours of operation as compared to the FY 2011 proposed budget; also compared to libraries in the surrounding jurisdictions.

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Current Branch Hours</b>	<b>Current Central or Regional Library Hours</b>	<b>2011 Proposed Budget</b>
Alexandria	Mon-Thurs 9am-9pm Fri. 9am-6pm Sat. 9am-5pm Closed Sunday	Mon-Thurs 9am-9pm Fri. 9am-6pm Sat. 9am-5pm Sun. 1pm-5pm	Central Library opens: Mon-Thurs 10am-9pm Fri. 10am-6pm Sat. 10am-5pm Sun. 1pm-5pm  Branches open: Mon.-Thurs. 10am-7pm Fri. 10am-6pm Sat. 10am-5pm Closed Sunday
Fairfax County	Mon.-Wed. 10am-8pm; Thurs/Fri 10am-6pm; Sat. 10am-5pm; Closed Sunday	M-W 10am-8pm; Th-Fri. 10am-6pm; Sat. 10am-5pm; Sun. 1pm-5pm	Regional libraries open: Mon. and Wed. 1pm-9pm; Tues./Thurs./Fri. 10am-6pm; Sat. 10am-5pm; Sunday 1pm-5pm;  Branches open: Mon./Wed. 10am-6pm; Tues/Thurs. 1pm-9pm; Fri. 10am-6pm; Sat. 10am-5pm; Closed Sunday
Prince William County	Mon.-Thurs. 10am-7pm; Closed Friday; Sat. 10am-2pm; Closed Sunday	Mon.-Thurs. 10am-9pm; Fri/Sat. 10am-5pm; Sunday 12pm-5pm (mid-September to 1 <sup>st</sup> week in June)	Regional: reduce by 4 hours/week; close all libraries on Sunday.  Branches: reduce hours from 40 to 20 hours per week.

**Conclusion:**

A review of the budget shows the Library could provide a one night opening, 1:00pm-9:00pm in each branch at no additional cost. The Library Director does not recommend a second night because the statistics show a stronger usage pattern in the mornings. However, this action would require Library Board approval.

The City is 15.2 sq miles, with 4 branch libraries in close proximity to each other. Furthermore, each branch library is approximately 2-5 miles from the Beatley Central Library. Therefore, if one night were added to the schedule, accessibility would be improved.