

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 7, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #36 : EXTENDED ALEXANDRIA LIBRARY HOURS

This memorandum responds to a request from Councilman Krupicka concerning costs to open branch libraries on Sundays for four hours, allowing the library system to have Sunday hours at all branches. Additionally, this memorandum details options to provide additional night hours at library branches during the work week.

Background:

Historically, Sunday library service has been the responsibility of the central library, where primary reference tools and comprehensive circulating collections are located. When Beatley Central Library was built in 2001, the main collections were relocated from Queen Street (Barrett Branch Library) and Sunday library service was transferred to Beatley. While the Library's original intent was to only provide Sunday hours at Beatley Central Library, City Council continued to provide funding for Sunday hours at the Barrett Branch Library.

From 2001-2009, the Alexandria Library offered Sunday hours via the Beatley and Barrett Libraries. However, in FY 2010, the Barrett Branch was closed on Sundays as a result of approximately \$1.1 million in budget cuts to the entire Alexandria Library system. The decision to eliminate the hours at Barrett was based on patron usage and a cost benefit analysis of keeping Sunday hours.

During the FY 2011 budget process, budget cuts reduced branch library hours from 65 to 50 hours per week, central library hours were reduced from 69 to 63 hours per week, and the Local History Library hours were reduced from 65 to 30 hours (Attachment A provides current hours at each library facility).

Issues:

One of the primary goals of the Library Five-Year Plan is to restore the hours cut during the FY 2011 budget process. Response from the community supports the restoration of hours cut in FY 2011 rather than adding Sunday hours at all branch libraries. The following information was examined to assist in determining whether restoring a portion of the hours cut in FY 2011 is more beneficial than opening all branches on Sundays:

1. In order to efficiently run Sunday library service (four hours on Sundays at the three branch libraries), a mixture of permanent and temporary employees is needed. This is

similar to other local area library systems staffing models. The total cost is approximately \$74,340 including personnel, utilities and custodial services costs. Because the branches would be open on an additional day, additional staff would need to be hired in order to provide service consistent with the rest of the week at the three branches. Additionally, the branch libraries would assume volunteers for Sunday shelving.

2. In benchmarking with the surrounding jurisdictions, Fairfax, DC, Prince William, Prince Georges, and Montgomery County only have Sunday hours at their central facilities or regional facilities and not in the branches. Arlington County has Sunday hours at its central library and two self-service branches. Each of the self-service libraries is closed Thursdays.
3. Library usage statistics supports adding two hours to each branch library offering the community an additional night of library service (see Attachment B). Currently, each branch has one night a week that offers hours until 9pm (Barrett on Mondays; Duncan on Wednesdays; and Burke on Thursdays.) Beatley Central Library is also open until 9pm Monday through Thursday. All branch managers identified Monday night as an evening that their patrons preferred for them to be open until 9pm.

Library Recommendation:

Should City Council allocate additional resources to the Alexandria Library, restoring the regular business hours which the Library cut due to declining City revenues is directly in line with the expectations of the community and ties to the Library's Five-Year Plan. The Library Director would recommend restoration of two hours, one night a week, at each branch library (Monday from 7pm – 9pm at Burke and Duncan; a day to be determined from 7pm to 9pm at Barrett). The estimated cost of adding these night hours to the branch libraries in the FY 2012 budget would be approximately \$24,500, and existing staff would be used to provide coverage for those additional hours by adding hours to their schedule, which could result in overtime in some cases. Should City Council desire to add any more than two hours at each branch library (i.e. adding four hours), then total costs would be similar to those as adding hours on Sunday as additional staff would need to be hired (approximately \$75,000).

Additionally, under the City of Alexandria 2010-2015 Strategic Plan, Goal 7, there is a Library initiative to conduct a needs assessment/feasibility study to determine its current and future needs. The study, with estimated cost of \$40,000, is not funded in the Proposed FY 2012 Operating Budget. The Library Director would like to have this study conducted before undertaking a new service change (Sunday branch library hours).

Attachment A – Current Hours at Alexandria Library Facilities

<u>Library</u>	<u>Current Days/Hours</u>
Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library	M – Th: 10am – 9pm F: 10am – 6pm Sat: 10am – 5pm Sun: 1pm – 5pm
Kate Waller Barrett Branch Library	M: 1pm – 9pm T – Th: 10am – 7pm F: 10am – 6pm Sat: 10am – 5pm
Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library	M-W: 10am – 7pm Th: 1pm – 9pm F: 10am – 6pm Sat: 10am – 5pm
James M. Duncan Branch Library	M-T: 10am – 7pm W: 1pm – 9pm Th: 10am – 7pm F: 10am – 6pm Sat: 10am – 5pm
Local History/Special Collections	M: 1pm – 9pm T: 2pm – 7pm W: 10am – 7pm F: 10am – 6pm First Saturday of Month: 10am – 5pm

Attachment B – Library Usage Statistics

Attachment B provides details on Library patron usage at Beatley, Barret, Burke, and Duncan. November 2009 is the last month where all the libraries offered 7-9pm evening hours.

Alexandria Library Usage - November 2009

	Barrett	Beatley	Burke	Duncan
Monthly Circulation Totals	12,032	46,019	10,158	21,609
Monthly Patron Use	9,530	30,154	13,246	17,617
Monthly Computer Use	81%	84%	74%	68%
% meeting room in use				
9-1pm**	N/A	N/A	24%	38%
7-9pm	N/A	N/A	43%	31%
 Hourly checkout from 10am-1pm*				
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
Total from 10am-1pm	3596	11125	2434	6179
 Hourly checkout from 7-9pm*				
7-8pm	281	1928	540	882
8-9pm	263	1576	359	804
Total from 7-9pm	544	3504	899	1686

* This figure includes renewals done remotely or by phone

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