

September 18, 2002

Honorable Mayor and Members of
the Hermosa Beach City Council

Regular Meeting of
September 24, 2002

**LIBRARY SUBCOMMITTEE PROPOSAL TO WITHDRAW
FROM THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM AND TO SET A
PUBLIC HEARING TO ALLOW THE RESIDENTS AND USERS OF THE
LIBRARY TO PROVIDE INPUT TO THE
CITY COUNCIL PRIOR TO GIVING THE REQUIRED NOTICE TO THE
LIBRARY SYSTEM**

Recommendation:

That the City Council consider the subcommittee recommendation and determine whether or not to schedule a public hearing for the October 22, 2002 meeting.

Background:

The Library Subcommittee has been meeting over the last several months considering the future of library services in Hermosa Beach. The subcommittee has been assisted by the Friends of Library including Charlotte Malone, Bill Malone, Al Valdez, Tonie Empringham, Cathy McCurdy and Sheri Petresky. In addition, Lee Ireland of Library Systems and Services provided a discussion proposal on the cost of operating the library under a contract.

The City has been dealing with the issue of leaving the L.A. County library system for a number of years. The interest in leaving the system has continued over the years because of the constant concern that the level of service and operating hours always seem to be subject to budget cuts. The hours for the library were reduced to 16 hours per week in 1993 as a result of the state budget cuts and the shift of property tax revenues from local government to fund schools. The hours were eventually set at the current 35 hours per week that the Hermosa Beach branch now operates. Cuts in operational hours for all branch libraries was considered again this year but were not reduced as the county was able to provide funding by cutting all material and supply budgets. The subcommittee has concluded that the City should consider withdrawing from the library system so that we can offer a consistent, high level of service to Hermosa Beach residents that meets the needs of the city. It is the subcommittee's opinion that a City operated library would be able to provide the same or a better level of service than we presently receive now through the L.A. County system. This could be done within the current property tax allocation now received by the county. The City would receive an estimated \$530,000 per year to operate the library. The subcommittee received a proposal from Library Systems and Services for discussion purposes and estimated an operating cost for the library at between \$430,000 and \$460,000 depending on the hours open to public and the amount set for new materials. This would be within the property tax revenue that the

City would receive. A more detailed budget along with options of contracting with nearby cities could also be explored if the City Council wishes to proceed with the discussion and consideration of leaving the county system. There would be some start up costs that are not included in the estimated amount and again these would be the subject of further study and review.

The process to withdraw from the system requires that the City provide notice to the county by December 2nd for a withdrawal to be effective on July 1, 2003. The City Council would have to adopt an ordinance to set up a library board that would function as an advisory body to the City Council. The subcommittee has suggested that the City Council set a date for a public hearing to allow the community to be made aware of their recommendation and receive input from community on it.

The subcommittee is confident that a City-operated library would provide our residents with a higher level of service that would better meets their needs. It would also provide an opportunity for greater participation by the community in adding services or facilities knowing that they would be kept in the city.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen R. Burrell
City Manager