

October 17, 2002

Honorable Mayor and Members of
the Hermosa Beach City Council

Regular Meeting of
October 22, 2002

**CONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY SERVICES AND THE
POSSIBLE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE
LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM**

Recommendation:

That the City Council conduct a public hearing on the issue of the City withdrawing from the L.A. County Library System. Staff further recommends that you receive the public input, and direct staff to return with any additional information requested during the hearing for action by the City Council at a later meeting.

Background:

The Library Sub-committee presented a report to you on September 24, 2002 with a request that the City Council schedule a public hearing to allow public input on the proposal to withdraw from the L.A. County Library System. That report is attached.

The primary purpose of the public hearing is to receive input from residents concerning the library and library services. Following the public hearing, it is anticipated that staff would be directed to return at a future meeting with additional information, answers to questions or comments raised at this meeting.

There have been several general questions that have been raised and the following is an attempt to address them. Hopefully, these will spark other questions or comments during the public hearing.

1. How is it possible for the City to leave the L.A. County System?

Hermosa Beach, along with Manhattan Beach and Claremont, successfully sponsored SB1998, which allows cities in L.A. County, served by the County Library System, to withdraw and to receive the property tax collected for library purposes by the County.

In order to withdraw, the City must provide the County with notice of its intent to withdraw by December 2, 2002 for a withdrawal to be effective July 1, 2003.

2. How much in property taxes would be available for a City-operated library?

The property tax now collected from Hermosa Beach property owners is \$530,000 for library purposes. These funds now to the L.A. County System.

3. How much will it cost to run a Hermosa Beach library directly?

The sub-committee received a discussion proposal from a private contractor that operates other public libraries in Southern California. They estimated operating costs between \$430,000 to \$460,000, depending on hours of operation.

4. Who would provide oversight for the operation of the library?

The City Council would be responsible for the operation of the library. A Library Board, composed of Hermosa Beach residents, would be appointed and would advise the City Council on library related matters.

5. Who owns the library building?

The existing building is owned by the County. The agreement transferring title to the County allows the City to re-purchase the building at a nominal cost if the City is not a member of the County Library System. The cost to return title to the City is estimated to be less than \$5,000.

6. Who owns the shelving and future in the library?

These are owned by the County Library System. The City has the option to acquire these items as part of the withdrawal process negotiations.

7. Do we have to buy all new books?

The City has the option in the process to purchase the existing collection of materials in the library. This is also an item that would be covered in detail should a decision be made to withdraw.

8. Will Hermosa Beach residents still be able to borrow from other L.A. County libraries?

There presently exists an inter-library loan program that serves those cities that operate independent from the County. The L.A. County System participates in this program.

9. What options exist to staff and operate the library?

The City could contract with a nearby city, employ our own staff or contract with a private operator. All of these options would be explored in detail should a decision be made to withdraw.

10. Have any other cities in L.A. County withdrawn?

Yes. Calabasas, in the west Valley area, withdrew in 1998. They now operate a 12,000 square foot facility through a private contractor.

There are a number of details and additional work to accomplish if a decision is made to withdraw. The collection, furniture, building, and operating costs will be more developed and refined if a decision is made to move forward in the withdrawal process.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen R. Burrell
City Manager