



LIBRARY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION # Support for Austin Public Library FY25 Budget

Date: March 25, 2024

Subject: Support for Austin Public Library FY25 Budget

Motioned By:

Seconded By:

Recommendation

Support for Austin Public Library's proposed budget for FY2025 with additional funding for unmet needs around books and materials, social workers, security and custodial positions, feasibility studies, and enhanced library cards.

Description of Recommendation to Council

Requesting that the Austin City Council approve the proposed Austin Public Library budget for FY2025. Additionally, increased funding is requested for an increase of 6% to the books and materials budget, the addition of two, (2) FTE social worker positions, three, (3) FTE of additional security and three (3) FTE of additional custodial positions, \$1.5 million for feasibility studies of new and expanded facilities, and the expansion of the enhanced library card initiative.

Rationale:

In FY 2023, the Austin Public Library completed a year-long strategic planning process to shape the work of the library for years to come. Input was provided for the plan through a community survey that received more than 5,400 responses, pop-up community events in 20 locations throughout Austin, as well as a series of surveys, workshops, and listening sessions with APL staff and external community stakeholders. The Austin Public Library Comprehensive Library Strategic and Facilities Plan, adopted by the City Council in March 2023, lays out new strategic goals for the Austin Public Library, aligned with the City of Austin's *Imagine Austin* 30-year strategic plan and the SD28 5-year strategic plan.

Our recommended budget provides Austin Public Library with the resources needed to advance the five strategic goals laid out in that plan document, as well as to achieve the Library's new Mission Statement: "Inspiring all to discover, learn, and create."

The proposed budget includes a 3% increase in the budget for materials, including digital materials, subscriptions, and databases. Austin's population growth, and the increased cost of materials – especially e-books, which represent a fast-growing share of APL's circulation and require expensive licenses. These proposed increases are necessary to keep up with inflation but do not represent a growth budget and may, in fact, lead to a reduction of e-resources and increased patron wait times to access materials. An additional 3% increase for a total of 6% to the books and materials budget would help close the gap. The Commission also supports funding the listed unmet needs of the library.

While the Library has generally recovered from the pandemic and the resulting diminishment of services and capacity, the staff now face new challenges resulting from post-pandemic societal pressures. Every day throughout the library system, staff assist Austinites who are experiencing homelessness, in need of warming or cooling stations, or coping with complex problems of substance abuse, mental health, and medical assistance. Many library patrons have multiple needs that require specialized training and some library visitors can be obstreperous, abusive, or violent. While the Library is ready and willing to assist these persons and can provide a valuable link to vital services, staff need support in the form of social workers, security, and custodial staff, to assist with training and preparation in how to handle these situations and ensure that libraries remains safe and clean for everyone.

While the Commission supports all funding requested by library staff in the FY 2025 budget, the Commission is especially interested in increased funding for the following projects:

- Funding increase of 6% to the materials budget
- Additional funding to support 2 FTE of social worker positions and 3 FTE of additional security and 3 FTE of additional custodial positions
- Funding of \$1.5 million for feasibility studies for new and expanded facilities to meet the infrastructure objectives contained in the strategic planning process completed in 2023
- Expansion of the highly successful Enhanced Library Card initiative.

Vote

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest: