



MAYOR & COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

DATE: December 17, 2013

REGULAR

ITEM #12

AGENDA ITEM: Washington County Library Card Reimbursement

SUBMITTED BY: Mike Pearson, Mayor
Lake Elmo Library Board

THROUGH: Dean Zuleger, City Administrator

REVIEWED BY: Adam Bell, City Clerk

SUGGESTED ORDER OF BUSINESS:

- Introduction of Item City Administrator
- Report/Presentation.....City Administrator
- Questions from Council to Staff..... Mayor Facilitates
- Call for Motion Mayor & City Council
- Discussion..... Mayor & City Council
- Action on Motion..... Mayor Facilitates

POLICY RECOMMENDER: Mayor/Library Board

FISCAL IMPACT: \$80,000 of the annual Library Fund Tax Levy would be used for the purposes outlined herein. There is no impact on the overall budget or residents' taxes.

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED: City Council is respectfully requested to consider entering a fee for service arrangement with Washington County to improve the access to County Library resources. In order to do this, the Lake Elmo Library Board has requested that the Council offer to purchase this more streamlined and equitable access in the amount of \$80,000. Council can do so by making the following motion:

“Move to approve, at the request of the Lake Elmo Library Board, an annual distribution of \$80,000 library levy dollars to Washington County in order to buy Lake Elmo residents the same ease of access and use of the county library system similar to all other Washington county residents. This direct fee for service amount reflects Lake Elmo residents’ 2013 county card purchase revenues plus an additional \$50,000.”

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY: Presently, Washington County Library cards are purchased via individual retail transactions. A county employee must perform the transaction, record it and eventually deposit the payment. The Lake Elmo resident, subsequent to the purchase, seeks reimbursement from the City by delivering the receipt to the city hall. At such time, city staff provides the remuneration via checks which are sent out on a bi monthly basis following Council approval of disbursements. At a minimum, the process takes two to three weeks and is revisited annually. Clearly, this process is inefficient and time consuming for Lake Elmo residents, county and City staff. A more wholesale arrangement would be far superior for all involved parties.

Recent changes in access to certain county resources (mainly electronic) imposed by the county provides a perfect time to try and find a better and more equitable solution to library access. As part of the county's rationale for changes to access has been financial, this also is a good time for City to show itself as a good partner by offering an increased contribution to the system.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (SWOT):

Strengths This proposal would provide equal ease of access to county library resources to Lake Elmo residents and taxpayers that are currently granted to other county residents. There is no increased cost to the residents either way as the proposed funds come out of the library levy. The budget remains unaffected. By streamlining the process, this will save the county money as well by decreasing the bureaucracy involved in the reimbursement procedure.

Weaknesses The proposal may not be high enough for county to accept, despite it being \$50,000 over last year's contribution (160% increase).

Opportunities This proposal provides and opportunity for continuing discussion and negotiations with county staff towards ultimately a greater affiliation with the county system.

Threats Washington County could reject the proposal, and City residents would still be subject to the current reimbursement process. The county could demand the entire levy amount and leave the City residents with the status quo.

RECOMMENDATION: The Lake Elmo Library Board requests that the City Council pay Washington County \$80,000 for equal access to Washington County Library resources by taking the following action:

“Move to approve, at the request of the Lake Elmo Library Board, an annual distribution of \$80,000 library levy dollars to Washington County in order to buy Lake Elmo residents the same ease of access and use of the county library system similar to all other Washington county residents. This direct fee for service amount reflects Lake Elmo residents’ 2013 county card purchase revenues plus an additional \$50,000.”

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft 12/11/2013 Library Board Minutes