

June 14, 2010

Beth Pollard
City Administrator
City of Albany
1000 San Pablo Avenue
Albany, CA 94706

Dear Beth:

The main purpose of the Library Board is to "advise the City Council on matters relating to the Albany Library." As part of that duty, the Library Board annually reviews and makes a recommendation to the City Council on the "Agreement between the City of Albany and the County of Alameda for Additional Library Services". This agreement covers the use of the parcel tax monies collected for the Albany Library.

We are advising the Council to accept the Agreement. However, we do want to inform the council that the Library Board does have serious reservations about the Agreement:

1. During the April 28th Library Board meeting, Deputy County Librarian Ann Hammond informed the Board that the County would be decreasing their contribution to library services in Albany by \$150,000 sometime this summer. This is a significant cut in the library budget and maintaining the 41 total open hours stipulated in the Agreement will be in jeopardy. This cut is due to the County's conviction that the Albany Library is, and has been for some years, receiving more than our fair share of county funds, and their determination to reduce this annual "subsidy" as soon as possible. However, we have tried, without success, to understand how this "subsidy" is calculated. We have no way of knowing if the calculations are correct or fair.
2. The Albany Library currently has two vacant full-time librarian positions. We cannot determine if the City has been credited for these salary savings, if the savings from these vacant positions will be part of the \$150,000 cut, or if there will be further cuts in funding.
3. We cannot determine with certainty exactly what the Agreement with the County is paying for. It stipulates 25.5 additional open hours, but it is completely unclear how the cost per hour is derived and what other services or materials our additional funds may be buying. We want a contract that explains clearly exactly how our parcel tax money is used.
4. The total library budget as presented by the county is thoroughly opaque, and contains various discrepancies and oddities that we have been asking to have explained. County Library representatives who have attended our meetings have been unwilling or unable to answer our questions. We asked to have a representative from the County at our May Library Board meeting, but no one from the County attended. The letter from County Librarian Jean Hofacket accompanying the Agreement referred us to Charles Adams, Albany's Finance Director, for answers to our questions.

We are responsible to the citizens of Albany to understand how their tax dollars are used. Under the present conditions, we are unable to state with certainty that we do understand. It is very difficult to recommend this contract for your approval under these circumstances, but we feel that we have no other choice. Failure to approve the Agreement could result in immediate staff and service reductions at the library. We will continue to try to get clarification from the County.

We are pleased that the City is moving forward in evaluating the current arrangement with the County Library, and is exploring other options for the delivery of Library services.

Sincerely,

Leah Flanagan, on behalf of
Albany Library Board

LF:eh