

MEMORANDUM

September 11, 2020

TO: John Alita, Interim Deputy City Manager

FROM: Suzanne M. Daveluy, Interim Director of Community Services

SUBJECT: **FREE INTERNET ACCESS AND PHASED REOPENING OF LIBRARIES**

BACKGROUND

When libraries closed in March due to COVID-19 in compliance with State and local orders, staff responded by developing and producing virtual programs for all ages accessible on the Library's Facebook page. Staff also began issuing library cards over the phone to enable customers to access the wide array of electronic resources including, but not limited to, Tutor.com, Bookflix, Overdrive, and Rosetta Stone.

On June 11, staff began offering curbside service at the library lobbies. This service enables customers to pick up their requested materials and ask reference questions. Library cards for access to electronic resources are still issued over the phone, but customers may upgrade their cards to full borrowing privileges (e.g. able to check out physical materials) by presenting appropriate identification at the library lobbies.

In support of community members who do not have Internet connectivity in their homes, staff applied for a California State Library grant to purchase Wi-Fi hot spots for circulation by the Library. Grant award notification is expected this month.

Staff have continued to adapt services based on guidelines and changes in executive orders. Further, staff monitor studies being conducted by Reopening Archives, Libraries and Museums (REALM), a research partnership to create and distribute science-based information and recommended practices to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in the handling of core library materials.

PRESENT SITUATION

On August 28, 2020, Governor Newsom announced a new plan for reopening. Although San Joaquin County is in the most restrictive tier, libraries may reopen with a maximum of 25% capacity while following the guidance for retail. Many members of our community do not have reliable Internet access in their homes, and the Library's free Internet connectivity (public computers and Wi-Fi for personal devices) has been a much-needed resource.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION

ACCESS TO FREE INTERNET

During the current closure of libraries, Community Services Staff will make available physically distanced outdoor seating for use of free Wi-Fi. Access to free Wi-Fi will be available 7 am – 7 pm Monday-Friday at all libraries and community centers. Staff will monitor the outdoor seating and clean shared services between customers as they can. This service will be promoted through a county-wide press release, signage at all facilities, and in communications to local school districts and community partners.

When libraries reopen, access to public computers will be available. Some computers may be disabled to ensure physical distancing of 6 feet between stations. Thirty-minute time limits will be implemented on all public computers to ensure access for as many people as possible; customers needing an extension of time to seek assistance related to the pandemic, however, will be allotted extra time upon request. In addition, staff are developing a program to provide one-on-one virtual assistance to community members in need of job search assistance. Outdoor access to Wi-Fi will continue when libraries reopen for those people who prefer not to enter the buildings.

LIBRARIES

Staff recommend a phased reopening that aligns with the newest California guidelines effective August 31, 2020. Enhanced reopening will depend on San Joaquin County's successful progress through the four tiers: Purple, Red, Orange, and Yellow.

Purple (current as of August 31, 2020): Continue providing curbside service at the library lobbies. Staff are offering virtual class visits to schools throughout the County.

During this time, staff will prepare for modified reopening when San Joaquin County successfully moves to the next tier (Red). Staff will work with Human Resources - Risk to comply with OSHA requirements regarding staff and public areas; this will include negotiating enhanced janitorial services in the County branches. Distance Learning Camps will continue at Chavez Library and Stribley Community Center.

Red: Reopen with limited hours (current curbside service hours) at 25% capacity of people (staff and customers) based on the square feet of each building's public area. To maintain the 25% capacity, staff will be assigned to monitor entrance and egress of customers. No indoor seating will be provided, except for seating at computer stations situated 6 feet apart.

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Since all libraries, except for the Micro Libraries, will be open in this tier, staff recommend moving the Chavez Distance Learning Camp to the Seifert Community Center. Most families attending the Chavez Camp live in North Stockton, making Seifert easily accessible to them. Because the micro libraries are located within community centers, those will open when state guidelines allow.

Orange: Remain at 25% capacity but extend open hours to the pre-COVID library schedule.

Yellow: Expand capacity based on San Joaquin County Public Health or State recommendations with open hours the same as the Orange tier.

Respectfully submitted,



SUZANNE M. DAVELUY
INTERIM DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

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