



Anchorage Library Foundation and Friends of the Library Strongly Oppose Mayor's Proposed Cuts to Library Budget

Despite claims that the 2012 budget will result in few cuts to city services, the Library is slated to lose two positions, valued at over \$120,000, in the Mayor's proposed 2012 budget.

"The proposed cuts are only the latest in a series of big hits to our Library. Last year's budget forced the closure of the Samson Dimond Branch library, a successful part of our community for 33 years," says Library Advocacy Committee Chair Mary Rasmussen. "Staffing has been reorganized and cut on an almost yearly basis. This cut is in addition to 14 positions that were lost in 2010."

The Mayor's proposed budget does not reflect community recommendations from the 2010 budget dialogue, in which the majority spoke out in favor of maintaining current service levels and sparing departments with small budgets from further cuts.

"While the Municipality's budget has nearly doubled over the past ten years, the Library's portion has decreased from a high of 4% of the MOA budget in 1985 to today's low of 1.75%," Rasmussen continued. "To even maintain a modest 2% of the budget would require an additional \$1.1M. We have reached the point where further reductions will have serious, negative impacts to library services and our community."

The Anchorage Public Library is a beloved institution: 60% of residents have library cards, over 1.6 million items are checked out annually and with over 870,000 visits a year, library attendance tops attendance at the Sullivan Arena by 74%.

Additionally, the Anchorage Library Renewal Initiative, begun in 2006, has generated considerable community investment in the Library. Over \$14M has been contributed since 2006 from public and private sources to renovate neighborhood libraries, and the recent Loussac Library 25th Anniversary celebrations have drawn volunteers and contributions from residents across the city. From BP employees who volunteered for a Day of Caring, to dancers who spent weeks rehearsing for a flash mob staged at the library, to individuals who have made a financial contribution in recognition of this significant community milestone.

The Municipality has a responsibility to honor this private investment with adequate public support to operate the great library that this great community deserves. Despite record-high usage and community support, staffing levels and funding lag far behind peer libraries across the country and the Library struggles to maintain adequate levels of service on a steadily decreasing budget.

The Advocacy Committee insists that the Mayor and Assembly follow the recommendations of the community budget dialogues and not only maintain, but increase the Library's current level of service to the community.

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