

## May 5, 2011 Special Meeting of the Oakland City Council

### *Prepared Remarks*

Good evening. My name is Steve Tidrick. I am an Oakland resident and Chair of Oakland's Library Advisory Commission. Several of us on the Library Commission are here tonight: Gen Katz, Linda White Taylor, Peggy Simmons, Tom Manley, Sylvester Grisby, and our Vice Chair, Jill Broadhurst.

As library commissioners, it is our responsibility, by city ordinance, to study, investigate, research, and make policy recommendations as directed by the City Manager and the City Council. The library commission also has the responsibility to review and make recommendations on Measure Q expenditures.

Measure Q was placed on the ballot by the City Council in 2003 in response to citywide budget cuts and the threatened closure of branch libraries. It provides for the collection of a special parcel tax for the library, which in 2010-11, will raise just under \$14 million annually, and, to raise those funds, the city is required to fund the library in the amount of about \$9 million out of the general fund.

Oakland residents, community leaders, and activists worked tirelessly to enact Measure Q, in conjunction with several organizations, including Friends of the Oakland Public Library, the Oakland Neighborhood Library Coalition, and Save Our Libraries. Literally hundreds of volunteers worked phone banks, passed out leaflets, put up lawn signs, and walked neighborhoods. In the end, the percentage of Oakland voters who voted for Measure Q was remarkable: more than 77%.

Which brings us to the proposed budgets. The Library's fiscal year 2010-11 total budget is about \$23.6 million. Of that, about \$9 million is from the general fund, \$14 million is from Measure Q, and about \$500,000 from grants and other revenue. This budget funds the services, programs, materials, technology, maintenance and upkeep for 18 library facilities throughout Oakland, including the Main Library, the African-American Museum and Library, the Tool Lending Library, and the Second Start Literacy Program.

The Mayor's fiscal year 2011-13 Proposed Budget has three scenarios. Scenario A is the "All Cuts Budget" and is the one that fundamentally affects the Library and its services. It indicates a fiscal year 2011-12 General Fund appropriation for the Library of about \$3.6 million and *no money* from Measure Q. Because the City's General Fund appropriation would fall below what Measure Q requires, the City would not be able to collect Measure Q funds.

The impact on Oakland's Library system would be significant. Thirteen branch libraries would close, including:

- Asian
- Brookfield
- Chavez
- Eastmont
- Elmhurst
- Golden Gate
- Lakeview
- Martin Luther King
- Melrose
- Montclair
- Piedmont Avenue
- Temescal, and
- West Oakland

Also, the African-American Museum and Library (AAMLO) would close.

The Tool Lending Library would close.

Second Start Adult Literacy would close.

There would be limited funds for new books, DVDs, and other materials.

The Oakland History Room would have reduced hours.

Electronic services like downloadable books and databases would be discontinued.

There would be little to no funding for class visits, programs, collections, facilities support and maintenance, technology maintenance or upgrades, summer reading programs, or children story hours.

None of this is inevitable. Personally, I stand with many Oaklanders who believe that the voters should have a choice in June whether to have a parcel tax to raise the general fund revenues needed to prevent this. Ultimately, of course, it is up to you, the City Council, whether or not to give the voters that choice. I think the French playwright Molière said it best: "It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable."

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