
MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Dave Bronson
City Manager Amy Demboski
Cc: Anchorage Municipal Assembly
Library Advisory Board
From: Cristy Willer, Chair, Library Advisory Board
RE: Request for Information
Date: May 15, 2022

In addition to its role under the Charter as "the planning body in charge of all library activities of the municipality...", the Library Advisory Board has the responsibility to "[m]ake recommendations to the administration and assembly for the adoption, change, repeal or alteration of rules, regulations, restrictions on library services, and all other matters directly or indirectly affecting the municipal library program."

Of late, the LAB has not been able to effectively meet these responsibilities due to lack of information. Perhaps we have not asked firmly or explicitly enough; perhaps we are simply experiencing informational supply-chain issues. In any case, several serious matters have been brought to our attention upon which, with your assistance, we will be able to appropriately make informed planning and policy recommendations.

1. Unfilled positions. Members of the public have expressed concern regarding what is perceived as a staff exodus from the library. Some have even implied that vacancies are being intentionally left unfilled. These allegations are quite concerning, and the LAB has had no specific data to either refute or support them. Therefore, to enable us to address these concerns—to respond to rumors with the facts of the matter—several requests were made to Ms. Eledge to provide the LAB with information regarding empty positions, how long they've been empty, and steps being taken to fill them. On March 16, she provided the following chart, which included a list of recruiting notes on each, but the information was incomplete and nine months old.

Department/Branch	Openings	Filled	Waiting Approval
Administration	1	1	
IT	1	0	
Patron Services	2	1	
Collections	2	0	2
Tech Services	2	1	
Adult Services	1	1	
Youth Services	2	2	
Eagle River	3	1	

Girdwood	1	1
Mt View	N/A	N/A
Muldoon	N/A	N/A
TOTAL-as of 8/27/21	15	8

However, we have been able to compile what appears to be a more current and complete list of openings based on information from library staff and other sources. Dates listed with each position indicate when they were initially vacated or created.

Library Director (pending) 11/8/21
Collection Development Coordinator 2/17/22
Collection Librarian (in recruitment stage) 11/20/21
Library Assistant 2 – Technical Services 1/4/22
Library Assistant 2 – Technical Services 3/7/22
(4) Family Service Counselor positions 6/24/21
Family Service Specialist 3/18/22
Information Center Consultant 5/19/21
Library Assistant 1 (Patron Services) 3/7/21
Library Assistant 2 (Patron Services) 7/12/21
Library Clerk (Patron Services) 5/14/21
Library Assistant 2 (Eagle River) 12/20/21
Library Assistant 1 (Eagle River) 6/12/20
Professional Librarian 1 (Adult Services) 4/6/22
Library Assistant 3 (Adult Services) in hiring status 2/1/20
(2) Part-Time Professional Librarian 1 (Adult Services) in recruitment 8/2/21
Professional Librarian 1 (Youth Services) 5/24/21
Professional Librarian 2 (Youth Services) 4/6/22
(2) Part -Time Professional Librarian 1 (Youth Services) 10/25/20

Assuming this list is reasonably accurate, it indicates 24 current vacancies, of which only four appear today on the municipality’s HR posting page. In addition, several senior staff have recently resigned their long-held positions (Adult Services Supervisor, Collection Development Manager, Assistant Director of Public Services, and Adult Services Manager among them), so the actual number may be higher.

We have been unable to discern what actions are being taken to fill these positions, though we understand that they are fully funded in the 2022 operating budget. If any of these statements or charts are incorrect, please let us know, so that we can appropriately offer any advice and assistance regarding the library’s human resources situation. And please let us know if there is any formal or informal policy or practice relating to filling these positions, whether the idea is not to fill them at all, or to delay filling them, or a system for prioritizing them.

2. The decision to close the Loussac Library on Sundays “to improve patron services for more frequently used days” was revealed last week. This decision was made without LAB input—and without even prior notice to the LAB before it was announced in a press release—despite the fact that we are charged with making recommendations to the administration and assembly regarding “...restrictions on library services... .” Please let us know how and why this decision was made, and if, in fact, it was deemed necessary because of the lack of suitable personnel.

3. We are glad to know that there is progress in finding a new Library Director, though we are disappointed at the administration’s decision to not include LAB in the search process. We are very interested in meeting with the newly appointed Director. Ideally, we’d like to schedule Mr. Hudson into our next meeting, which is this Wednesday, May 18th at 5:30 p.m. If he is unable to meet with us due to the short notice, we would like your assistance in finding a suitable time and method to talk to him in the coming weeks, so that we can fulfill our legal mandate to make recommendations, as there are few things on the horizon that will so critically affect our municipal library. For the same reason we are asking the Assembly to notify us in advance of any interviews or work sessions that it may schedule relating to Mr. Hudson’s confirmation.

Above all, it is our aim to have the Library Advisory Board act as a forum and welcoming site for work-sessions with your staff on any matters of budget, personnel, or community services that affect the future of our library. Transparent, free exchange of information is, I believe, the best way to serve our patrons and the larger community. We are proud to be part of the Anchorage municipal team and proud to serve the people of this city.