

Contra Costa County Library Commission 2021 Annual Report

Executive Summary

Like the previous year, 2021 was a time of unprecedented challenges and opportunities for the Contra Costa County Library system. Throughout, the Commission continued to provide support and guidance in varying capacities, including but not limited to: attendance and/or written comment provided to City Council, Board of Supervisors, and other relevant public meetings; advocacy to advance federal and state legislation pertinent to libraries and encouragement of elected officials to cosponsor and/or promote relevant bills; support of the County Librarian's Measure X proposal to expand library hours and provide funds for repair and facility upgrades; advisory conversations with elected officials who represent Commissioners' communities; and formation of an operating committee to establish start-up funding and protocols for a county-wide foundation. These and other actions are detailed in the following report.

Introduction

The annual report represents the various activities engaged in by individual Commissioners and Alternates as well as the Commission as a whole in furtherance of the Commission's 2021 Work Plan. For public health and safety reasons, their actions were mostly relegated to virtual or remote participation. The Commission, and all associated working and operating committees, met virtually, via Zoom, throughout the entire calendar year.

In a departure from previous reports, this iteration delineates *the totality of Commissioner activities* rather than designating specific activities by individual Commissioners. This modification aligns with the collegial nature of the Commission.

The time period for the annual report has been modified. Since the annual report is presented in draft form to the Commission at its September meeting with final action taken at the November meeting, the cutoff time for reporting on events should properly be August 31. For this report only, the time period covered is January 1, 2021 through August 31, 2021. Future reports' coverage will span September 1 of the previous year through August 31 of the current year.

The 2021 Work Plan was significantly expanded from those of prior years in response to issues of equity and public health that drew heightened attention in 2020. It should be noted that the County Library's administrative and operational staff has also significantly addressed these issues.

Full Report

Goal 1: Help establish sustainable funding and support for previously existing library programs and services and new needs raised by the economic downturn associated with the coronavirus pandemic.

In order to accomplish this goal, we will:

- *(Goal 1-A) Support the creation of a centrally organized private, not for profit, fundraising approach for funding countywide and local community library needs, complementary to locally organized friends and foundation efforts, for the purpose of meeting service standards and objectives of the Library's strategic plan.*

A working group of the Commission has continued to explore the creation of this entity. Significant progress has been made with regard to the foundation's start-up and operational aspects and its relationship to locally-organized friends and foundation groups. While the Commission is actively working to create this entity, it should be noted that it will be an independent not-for-profit group that is not under the operation or control of either the Commission or the Library Administration.

- *(Goal 1-B) Encourage collaboration between community library friends and foundation groups and interchange with commissioners through the Friends Council and the annual forum.*

Because of the global pandemic, the friends' council and annual friends and foundation forum was not held this year. Nonetheless, formal dialogue among Commissioners fostered important information sharing with the local friends and foundation groups about book sales, fundraising initiatives, and general activities.

- *(Goal 1-C) Explore ways of ensuring stable, equitable and adequate public and private funding for the county library and its various branches.*

and

- *(Goal 1-D) Work cooperatively with branch libraries to seek sustainable funding in service of their local communities.*

Many individual Commissioners are active members of their local friends and foundation groups and often serve on their boards of directors. In addition, Commissioners attend meetings of these local groups to keep them informed of county, state, and national

library issues. Some Commissioners also generously provide resources that support library activities either directly or through the friends and foundation groups. Lastly, Commissioners communicate regularly with Senior Community Library Managers to discuss emergent funding opportunities.

- *(Goal 1-E) Review and if in agreement with it, support the annual budget proposal prepared by the County Library for submission to the Board of Supervisors.*

The Commission worked with Library Administration and discussed their decision to increase county-supported library hours from 35 to 40 hours per week for the 2021-2022 and future fiscal years.

Goal 2: Liaise with elected officials, community groups, and residents to engender broad support for the Library system.

In order to accomplish this goal, we will:

- *(Goal 2-A) Increase legislative outreach at the local, state and federal levels to advocate for libraries, the services they provide, and the allocation of appropriate resources to them.*

The Commission, both directly and through its Legislative Committee, supported federal and state library funding initiatives, including S. 127 (the Build Americas Libraries Act). The Commission formally recommended that the Board of Supervisors support several of these measures. Individually, Commissioners urged support for adequate state and federal funding for libraries through our United States Senators and local Congress Members, State Senators, and Assembly Members. Progress regarding these various measures was reported on at Commission meetings.

- *(Goal 2-B) Have the Commission take an increasingly active role in the ALA and CLA lobbying efforts.*

In carrying out the activities in Goal 2-A, the Commission and individual Commissioners kept informed of the state- and federal-level lobbying efforts of the American Library Association and the California Library Association. Various Commissioners work directly with members of both groups.

- *(Goal 2-C) Report back to the appropriate appointing authority (city/town council, Supervisor, board or agency) on a periodic basis to bring it abreast of Commission activities, initiatives, and identified library needs.*

Individual Commissioners either met with their appointing authority (in the case of members of the Board of Supervisors) or reported publicly during meetings of their appointing City Councils. Some Commissioners also met with individual City Council members and helped to orient newly-elected council members on library issues.

- *(Goal 2-D) Develop a system of sharing appropriate stories about our library with public officials at the federal, state, and local level.*

This project (currently under development) will create impactful stories about our libraries' function and importance to present to various public officials. The project is intended to build stronger support for public funding for our libraries' needs.

- *(Goal 2-E) Seek support from the appropriate appointing authority when appropriate to meeting needs of the library system.*

Both the Commission and individual Commissioners advocated to the Board of Supervisors or local appointing authority for support of federal or state funding measures to increase library support.

- *(Goal 2-F) Bring information back to the Commission at its regular meetings on local needs, issues and support.*

and

- *(Goal 2-G) Make every effort to solicit feedback on our respective libraries, become familiar with their operations, successes and challenges, and advocate for them in their communities and at the county level.*

The countywide library system consists of municipality-provided libraries in 18 of the 19 cities and towns in the county (with two libraries in two of the cities) and county-provided libraries in 6 other locations. The county's large number of libraries makes information sharing a paramount aspect of Commissioner responsibilities. Thus, a portion of every Commission meeting is devoted to individual Commissioner reports regarding their library or district's needs, issues, and activities.

The information shared is gleaned through Commissioners' dialogue with library managers and staff, friends groups and foundations, local appointing authority and city staff, and other members of their local communities. By participating in local activities

and meetings, Commissioners are better positioned to inform members of their local communities of the programs, events, and resources available through their local library.

Finally, through their public participation in community events, Commissioners bring a visibility to the library which in turn not only informs members of the public about the library but helps build support for the library.

- *(Goal 2-H) Continue, consistent with public health requirements engendered by the coronavirus pandemic, to conduct Commission meetings at the branches, and seek to involve the local communities in these meetings.*

Due to the pandemic, the Commission was not permitted to meet in person this year.

- *(Goal 2-I) Reach out to organizations in the County (e.g. First 5, schools, PTAs, etc.) with common interests for the purpose of building supporting networks and programs.*

Commissioners conduct outreach to educate community organizations about the library's resources. The broad intent is to show these organizations how they can enhance the value and depth of their services by drawing upon the library's resources as appropriate. Such outreach often occurs through Commissioner involvement with outreach by their local friends or foundation group and/or appearance at public events, e.g., farmers markets, parades. This outreach was especially valuable during the pandemic as the means of accessing and availability of library resources had to be modified in response to healthy issues.

Goal 3: Work on those important global and national issues that affect the library system or that can be assisted by the resources that the library system can provide to the community.

In order to accomplish this goal, we will:

- *(Goal 3-A) Work with the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee of the Library Administration to address those issues.*

The Library Administration reported to the Commission on activities of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and the Commission provided feedback to the Administration.

• *(Goal 3-B) Seek, with appropriate private, county, and state partners, methods to help overcome the digital divide, including providing space to students needing undisturbed access to distance learning or reserved space for homework.*

This goal will be expanded beyond the scope of addressing the digital divide to that of providing assistance to underserved populations more broadly. One of the critical pivots in implementing this goal is library hours. The current funding model provides only enough staffing to permit each library to be open 40 hours a week, resulting in a barrier to access for those who need it most, both for its internet connectivity and [for] computer usage, private study space, and retrieval of information and resources.

Commissioners were successful, in conjunction with other members of their local library communities, in persuading some cities to provide funding to keep their respective local libraries open more than 40 hours a week. But, as County Librarian Alison McKee's Measure X presentation showed, the cities most in need of these expanded hours (i.e., those cities with the lowest per capita income) do not possess the resources to implement this additional funding. Further, county-provided libraries are limited to 40 open hours per week.

Commissioners were asked to support—through various means—the County Librarian's proposal to the Measure X Community Advisory Committee to provide funds to permit county libraries to be open 56 hours a week and for one-time repairs and upgrades to county facilities. The outcome of these efforts is still unknown. The Measure X Community Advisory Committee has presented its findings to the Board of Supervisors, who will subsequently determine final funding priorities and targets.

Library hours and the digital divide are not the only areas of inequity in terms of libraries and the services they supply. The importance of books in the home to the education of our children is well known. In addition, incarcerated populations whether adult or juvenile also have few if any book resources. As a result, some of the local library friends groups provide some of the books donated to them to these underserved populations. Commissioners have learned of these efforts and, as a result, other friends groups are likely to join these efforts.

• *(Goal 3-C) Work to foster civic discussion in our body politic.*

The pursuit of this goal has been significantly affected by the pandemic. Nonetheless, some Commissioners have engaged members of their communities in supporting efforts for the construction of new libraries and/or renovation of existing facilities.

- *(Goal 3-D) Work to highlight the role of libraries in disseminating factual information.*

Work on this issue is expected to begin shortly.

Goal 4: Serve as an advisory committee to the County on library issues.

In order to accomplish this goal, we will:

- *(Goal 4-A) Serve, as appropriate, in the selection process for a new County Librarian.*

One member of the Commission served on the advisory group that recommended the appointment of the County Librarian this year.

- *(Goal 4-B) Work with library staff, to the extent needed, in orienting the new County Librarian when that person is selected.*

Because of the new County Librarian's extensive record of experience in the Contra Costa County Library system, such orientation was not necessary.

- *(Goal 4-C) Provide thoughtful, consistent, sound and prompt advice and counsel to the County Librarian in regard to the annual budget, the strategic plan, changes in policy impacting service and programs, and any other matters raised.*

At various times throughout the year, the County Librarian presented issues to the Commission for discussion and solicitation of feedback.

Contra Costa County Library Commission 2022 Work Plan

The goals and Objectives listed below comprise the work plan for Contra Costa County Library Commission for calendar year 2022. They contain what the commission and its members will work to accomplish during that year.

Goal 1: Help establish sustainable funding and support for previously existing library programs and services and new needs raised by the economic downturn associated with the coronavirus pandemic.

In order to accomplish this goal, we will:

- Support the creation of a centrally organized private, not for profit, fund raising approach for funding countywide and local community library needs, complimentary to locally organized friends and foundation efforts, for the purpose of meeting service standards and objectives of the Library's strategic plan.
- Encourage collaboration between community library friends and foundation groups and interchange with commissioners through the Friends Council and the annual forum.
- Explore ways of ensuring stable, equitable and adequate public and private funding for the county library and its various branches.
- Work cooperatively with branch libraries to seek sustainable funding in service of their local communities.

Goal 2: Liaise with elected officials, community groups, and residents to engender broad support for the Library system.

In order to accomplish this goal, we will:

- Increase Legislative outreach at the local, state and federal levels to advocate for libraries, the services they provide and the allocation of appropriate resources to them.
- Have the Commission take an increasingly active role in the ALA and

CLA lobbying efforts.

- Report back to the appropriate appointing authority (city/town council, Supervisor, board or agency) on a periodic basis to bring it abreast of Commission activities, initiatives, and identified library needs.
- Develop a system of sharing appropriate stories about our library with public officials at the federal, state, and local level.
- Seek support from the appropriate appointing authority when appropriate to meeting needs of the library system.
- Bring information back to the Commission at its regular meetings on local needs, issues and support.
- Make every effort to solicit feedback on our respective libraries, become familiar with their operations, successes and challenges, and advocate for them in their communities and at the county level.
- Continue, consistent with public health requirements engendered by the coronavirus pandemic, to conduct Commission meetings at the branches, and seek to involve the local communities in these meetings.
- Reach out to organizations in the County (e.g. First 5, schools, PTAs, etc.) with common interests for the purpose of building supporting networks and programs.

Goal 3: Work on those important global and national issues that affect the library system or that can be assisted by the resources that the library system can provide to the community.

In order to accomplish this goal, we will:

- Work with the Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee of the Library Administration to address those issues.
- Seek, with appropriate private, county and state partners, methods to help overcome the digital divide including providing space to students needing undisturbed access to distance learning or reserved space for homework.

- Work to foster civic discussion in our body politic.
- Work to highlight the role of libraries in disseminating factual information.

Goal 4: Serve as an advisory committee to the County on library issues.

In order to accomplish this goal, we will:

- Provide thoughtful, consistent, sound and prompt advice and counsel to the County Librarian in regard to the annual budget, the strategic plan, changes in policy impacting service and programs, and any other matters raised.

Library Commission Attendance: January 2021– December 2021

Library Commission Attendance January 2021 – December 2021		Total	Total	Total	Total	signed BROWN ACT & Ethics Orientation video viewing certification
COMMISSIONERS	REPRESENTING	Meetings	Absent	Present	Excused	Received
Huh, John M., Ph.D.	City of Antioch	6	0	6	0	x
Vacant	City of Antioch (Alternate)					
Sendig, Linda	City of Brentwood	3	0	3	0	x
Faye, Vivian	City of Brentwood (Alternate)	6	0	6	0	x
Feree, Jacalyn	City of Clayton	6	0	6	0	x
Vacant	City of Clayton (Alternate)					
Smith, Tommy	City of Concord	6	0	6	0	Pending
Vacant	City of Concord (Alternate)					
Gemmer, Nicole	Town of Danville	6	0	6	0	x
Vacant	Town of Danville (Alternate)					
Fischer, Michael	City of El Cerrito	6	0	6	0	x
J. Barry Koops	City of El Cerrito (Alternate)	6	1	5	0	x
Campbell-Miller, Brian	City of Hercules	5	0	5	0	x
	City of Hercules (Alternate)					
Hoisington, Mary Ann	City of Lafayette	6	0	6	0	x
Dorothy Walker	City of Lafayette (Alternate)	3	0	3	0	
DeFraga, Matthew	City of Martinez	5	0	5	0	x
Vacant	City of Martinez (Alternate)					
Morgan, Sarah	Town of Moraga	3	0	3	0	x
Janette Maher	Town of Moraga (Alternate)	6	2	2	2	x
Peña-Mendrek, Yolanda	City of Oakley	6	2	4	0	x
Fitzpatrick, Arnold	City of Oakley (Alternate)	6	0	6	0	x
Garde, Shrikant	City of Orinda	3	0	3	0	x
Vacant	City of Orinda (Alternate)	4	1	3	0	x
Pursley, George	City of Pinole	6	0	6	0	x
Vacant	City of Pinole (Alternate)					
LeFrak-Bellici, Zelda	City of Pittsburg	6	1	5	0	x
Vacant	City of Pittsburg (Alternate)					
Bracken, Katherine	City of Pleasant Hill	6	0	6	0	x
Dozier, Julia	City of Pleasant Hill (Alternate)	6	0	6	0	x
Medrano, Antonio	City of San Pablo	6	1	5	0	x
Harlan-Ogbeidi, Charlene, Ph.D.	City of San Pablo (Alternate)	6	6	0	0	Pending
Mac, Ly	City of San Ramon	3	0	3	0	x
Vacant	City of San Ramon (Alternate)	3	1	2	0	x
Molinelli, Jasun	City of Walnut Creek	6	3	3	0	x
Vacant	City of Walnut Creek (Alternate)	4	3	1	0	x
Rosekind, Rachel, Ph.D.	District 1	4	0	4	0	x
Vacant	District 1 (Alternate)					
Hildreth, Susan	District 2	6	0	2	4	x
Swernoff, Michael	District 2 (Alternate)	6	0	5	1	x
Vacant	District 3					
Vacant	District 3 (Alternate)					
Smith, Alan B.	District 4	6	1	2	3	x
Vacant	District 4 (Alternate)					
Wilson, Peter, Ph.D.	District 5	6	0	6	0	Pending
Vacant	District 5 (Alternate)					
Mackey, Lynn	Office of Education	6	0	4	2	x
Thomas, Bryan	Contra Costa Central Labor Council	4	1	3	0	x
Hinton, Stacie	Contra Costa Central Labor (Alternate)	4	2	1	1	
Robison, Rich	Contra Costa Community College District	6	6	0	0	x