



**Contra  
Costa  
County**

To: Board of Supervisors  
From: Melinda Cervantes, County Librarian  
Date: December 11, 2018

Subject: Hearing to Adopt Resolution Approving New Schedule of Fines and Charges for the Contra Costa County Library

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

1. OPEN the public hearing to consider adopting resolution 2018/556: RECEIVE public comments, and CLOSE public hearing.
2. ADOPT Resolution No. 2018/556, superseding Resolution No. 2013/465, approving the new Fines and Charges Schedule for the Contra Costa County Library effective January 1, 2019, as recommended by the County Librarian.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

No impact to the General Fund. The Library budget will be adjusted to reflect the estimated reduction in revenue due to the elimination of overdue library materials fines and the one time discharge of library materials replacement cost charges. The budgeted appropriation allocation for the acquisition of library books will be reduced by \$300,000 to offset the reduction in estimated revenue.

☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY ADMINISTRATOR

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD COMMITTEE

Action of Board On: **12/11/2018** ☒ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☐ OTHER

Clerks Notes:

**VOTE OF SUPERVISORS**

AYE: Candace Andersen, District II  
Supervisor  
Diane Burgis, District III  
Supervisor  
Karen Mitchoff, District IV  
Supervisor  
Federal D. Glover, District V  
Supervisor

ABSENT: John Gioia, District I  
Supervisor

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: December 11, 2018

David Twa, County Administrator and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: June McHuen, Deputy

Contact: Melinda Cervantes,  
925-608-7701

cc:

## BACKGROUND:

The County Librarian and County Library Commission are recommending changes to the library fines and charges schedule. Contra Costa County Library goals include ensuring that everyone has easy, equitable access to library services. Following the public hearing the County Librarian requests the Board of Supervisors to adopt the new Contra Costa County Library Fines and Charges Schedule that will no longer include daily fines for overdue items to increase equitable access.

In a recent survey of Contra Costa County Library customers, respondents overwhelming identified “Cost of Living” as the most pressing concern in their communities. The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) recently published an *Issue Brief on Advancing Racial Equity in Public Libraries*, and identified library fines as a form of “structural racism,” pointing out that people who have difficulty paying fines experience negative consequences that include being blocked from library and computer use, or being reported to a collections agency. Supporting Parents in Early Literacy through Libraries (SPELL) research reveals that library fines and fees are barriers preventing low-income families from using public libraries. Other libraries in California that have recently eliminated overdue library fines include San Diego Public Library and Berkeley Public Library.

Communities in Contra Costa County with the largest amount of uncollectable debt include Antioch, Concord, Pleasant Hill, Pittsburg and San Pablo. The impact of fines on youth patron accounts alone prevents access to library materials and perceived access to all library services; kids and parents stop using the library. Of the 132,000 registered children and teen library cards, 43% currently owe a balance on their library accounts. Approximately 21,000 youth patron cards are blocked at a critical time in their lives when they most need access.

Overdue library material fines and library material replacement charges make up approximately 2% of the library’s budgeted revenue. Since FY 2013-14 revenue from fines and charges decreased by 31%. During this same period, circulation of ebooks and other e-resources have increased 128%. E-resources are already fine free and benefit those with greater access to technology.

Charges for replacement of lost or damaged library materials will remain on the Fines and Charges Schedule Policy. The processing charge has not changed since 1995 and does not reflect actual processing costs; staff recommends an increase from \$5.00 to \$10.00 per item. If an item is damaged or lost, replacement charges apply. If not returned thirty days after an item is due, the item is considered lost and the customer must pay the replacement and processing charges. The processing charge includes costs for replacement bar codes, Radio-Frequency identification (RFID) tags, book jackets, and property stamps, plus staff costs associated with processing.

Contra Costa County Library's *Project Equitable Access* resets the library's relationship with the public, inviting people to return to the library and take advantage of all that is offered. With the elimination of late fines it's anticipated that there will be a significant increase in the circulation of library materials and the number of active cardholders.

Upon approval by the Board of Supervisors, the Library will conduct an aggressive outreach effort to current and former library cardholders through the print and broadcast media, social media, schools, outreach events and via emails to encourage all to visit their closest library, get a new library card or reactivate an expired card, and return books and other materials without penalty. *Project Equitable Access* will offer a "fresh start" to children, teens and adults in Contra Costa County.

#### CONSEQUENCE OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

Without a public hearing, the proposed change to the Library Fines and Charges Schedule Policy could not be presented.

#### CLERK'S ADDENDUM

Speakers: Alan Smith, Library Commission.

#### ATTACHMENTS

Resolution No. 2018/556

Schedule of Fines & Charges