

Action Minutes
Library Advisory Board Meeting
160 W Central Ave, Coolidge, AZ 85128
January 19, 2022

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by the President, Andrea Hille-Andrews at 6:02 p.m.

Attended in Person: Janell Alewyn
Monte Allen
Andrea Hille-Andrews
Linda Heath
Shasta McKinney
Brenda Mitchell (arrived after Election of Officers)
Kevin Todd

Absent: None

Staff: Joyce Baker
Ricky LaPaglia

Public:

Approval of Minutes

November minutes were distributed. Monte made a motion to approve the minutes and Linda seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Election of Officers

Linda nominated Andrea Hille-Andrews to remain as president. Monte seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Monte nominated Kevin Todd to remain as vice-president. Linda seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Linda nominated Brenda Mitchell to remain as secretary. She was not present to agree to the nomination. Shasta seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Business

Identify ways to improve access to library services.

The advisory board asked Joyce to provide answers to the following questions:

1. *What is the total of outstanding balances?* There are 4,938 accounts with a total in outstanding balances of approximately \$185,000.
2. *How much of that total is on accounts exceeding \$5?* The reason for this question is because people with balances under \$5 can still use their account. Answer: approximately \$183,000. This means that only 1%

of the balances are on accounts from people who are actively charging up a balance and then paying it off frequently.

3. *How much money do we waive with the DVD donation program?* We waived approximately \$6,500 in fines over the last year. That number might be slightly lower due to COVID.
4. *How much of the fines belong to children & teens?* Unfortunately we don't have good statistics on this number because we only started collecting birthdates about 5 years ago. Total charges on accounts with a recorded birthdate prior to 12/10/2006 (under age 15) is \$12,231.02. Total charges on accounts with a recorded birthdate between 12/10/2003-12/10/2006 (ages 15-18) is \$5,742.92. Unfortunately these numbers don't reflect accounts with a blank in the birthdate.

I asked Apache Junction how they handled their overdue balances when they stopped charging late fees. They paid the company that maintains our database \$1,000. This allowed them to identify which balances were late fees and which were replacement costs. Then they waived all \$171,000 of late fees but retained the old accounts that still had replacement charges on them. This was 28% of all of their patron balances.

I asked Casa Grande how they handled their old balances. They did not clear them all at once. They forgive the old late fees as people enter the library. They also forgive any replacement fees that are "more than a few years old." The city was very hesitant to go fine free so they tested it on special cards for children that were limited to only three items at a time. Parents liked the cards but just opted to get regular cards so they could borrow more items. Three picture books don't really satisfy a young family. They only lost a few books the first year. Once COVID forced the libraries to close they just decided to go fine free on all accounts. They have not seen any adverse effect of going fine-free, only positive comments from patrons who are surprised when they're not charged. Revenue from overdue fees was minimal and their budget was not affected by the change.

5. *I asked the County which libraries are still charging late fees.* Their answer: Arizona City, Eloy, Kearny, Mammoth, Maricopa, Oracle, San Manuel, Superior, and Coolidge. Who isn't charging late fees? Apache Junction, Casa Grande, Florence, and San Tan Valley.

Define goals for clearing balances on accounts that have been expired for more than 3, 5, or 10 years.
Joyce presented the following data on accounts that have been expired for more the 3 years:

1. *How much of the fines are on accounts that have been expired for 3-5 years?* 573 accounts with \$21,936.14 in balances.
2. *How much of the fines are on accounts that have been expired for 5-10 years?* 1293 accounts with \$60,140.96 in balances.
3. *How much of the fines are on accounts that have been expired for more than 10 years?* 1251 accounts with \$56,585.60 in balances.

That means the total of account balances on accounts that are expired more than 3 years is \$138,662.70. I asked the county to run a similar report on Florence. While we have a few more items in our collection, we both circulate about the same number of items but they haven't charged late fees in more than 12 years. I'm not sure when they stopped charging late fees. They still charge people for lost materials. When running the same report, Florence patrons owe almost the same amount as our patrons - \$137,801. This shows that charging late fees do not likely persuade people to return items. Otherwise the Coolidge balance would be lower than Florence's balance.

Establish recommendations for new late fee structure.

After reviewing the data and considering how other libraries have increased access to library services while still ensuring that materials are returned, the advisory board asked the library to pay the \$1000 to Polaris so they can separate the late fee balances from the replacement charges. Library staff will gather this information so that they can present it to the city council at a work session. Joyce will also ask a library patron to tell their story at the city council work session about how late fees have affected their ability to access library services for their children.

Monte made a motion that the library present the following options at a city council work session:

1. Stop charging late fees on all children's material. This is not children's accounts, it is only material from the following collections: picture books, chapter books, children's fact books, children's DVDs and audiobooks, and young adult materials. This would truly increase access for children without opening the door to removing all late fees.
2. Stop charging late fees on all material.
3. After gathering information from the county on how much accumulated late fees are on accounts (not replacement costs), present the following options for how to handle old late fees.
 - a. Leave old balances and make people pay them before they can access library materials.
 - b. Quietly forgive old late fees on children's accounts as patrons visit the library.
 - c. Since the library can't identify which items that were returned late are children's materials and which are adult materials, just quietly forgive all late fees on accounts as patrons visit the library.
 - d. Publicly forgive old late fees on only children's accounts or all accounts. Tell people they can start a new chapter at the library. Note: these are only late fees, not replacement charges.
 - e. Some libraries have cleared all old balances. The board is not suggesting this as it would remove \$185,000 in fees.

Linda seconded this motion. Plan was unanimously approved.

Call to the Board

Call to the Public

Next meeting date: March 16, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Linda moved to adjourn the meeting, Monte seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.