

Budget Questions and Requests for Information
2013-14 Recommended Budget
QUESTION 23

QUESTION: Why was there a 15% cut in Library hours in spite of very high “priority” scores by Council and the general public?

RESPONDENT: Kenneth C. Pennoyer, Business Management Director

RESPONSE: When the Council decided to move forward with the Library expansion project, there was clear information that there would be additional operating costs that would be roughly equivalent to one penny on the tax rate. Our ability to fund those additional costs was, in part, dependent on revenue growth which has not rebounded in the manner we have seen in previous economic recovery periods. Faced with this uncertainty and yet another difficult budget year, Council chose in January of this year to delay the decision to hire additional personnel, budgeted in the FY13 operating budget, to augment existing staff for the 3 month period that the expanded Library would be open in the current budget year. The decision to delay was based on the Council’s interest in making this decision about additional staff in the context of all the competing needs for the 2013-14 budget.

As we developed the Manager’s Recommended Budget, it became clear that we would have difficulty funding the additional costs of more than \$600,000 to operate the expanded Library at the traditional 68 hour per week schedule, while at the same time maintaining service levels across the organization and pursuing other Council priority objectives. Our initial compromise, reflected in the Manager’s Recommended Budget, was to fund the additional building related costs of \$258,000 and partially fund the additional staffing costs in the amount of \$100,000 which is sufficient to add back 4 hours of operations on Saturdays. The additional Saturday hours seemed to be the most often cited issue. The rationale for this partial funding level was two-fold. First the Library has not been open long enough to fully understand changes in service demands that may accompany this dramatically different building. Second, with a new Library Director we felt there would be an opportunity to look at different strategies for staffing and service delivery that would affect the cost of operations. Our plan was to revisit this funding decision at mid-year when we have had the benefit of the new Director’s input, more experience in the expanded building and a better sense of what we can afford based on 1st quarter revenues.

During budget deliberations we have heard the concerns from Council and citizens regarding the change in Library hours and we are presenting Council with a number of options to increase those hours.