



CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH

City Council Meeting – Council Member Items Report

To: City Council
From: Rhonda Bolton, City Council Member
Dan Kalmick, City Council Member
Natalie Moser, City Council Member
Date: May 7, 2024
Subject: **HB PUBLIC LIBRARY: VOTE OF THE PEOPLE TO
PRIVATIZE/OUTSOURCE (CHARTER AMENDMENT) AND
POSTPONE/TERMINATE RFP PROCESS UNTIL AFTER VOTE**

ISSUE STATEMENT

As City Councilmembers, we are elected to be stewards of the City, the People's Treasury and its assets. We serve four, maybe eight years, but the City continues on without us. We receive the baton, do our best and then pass the baton to the next group of resident-leaders. We should take great care when contemplating actions that would leave an indelible mark on the City's history.

Over the last dozen months, we've documented more than a thousand pieces of correspondence from residents, and have had dozens, if not hundreds, of other conversations with concerned parents and library patrons about the future of our public library.

We have very little actual information about what privatization or outsourcing library management would look like since Huntington Beach is unique in its current operation of its library system. We're not leaving a county library system to stand up our own system like almost all libraries that have explored outsourcing. We don't have a programmatically broken library with low circulation and low foot traffic. And with the discussion of outsourcing, which would mean loss or reduction of their pension and likely decreased wages, our award-winning library team members are already seeking jobs elsewhere or have resigned. Just the process of contemplating a change is directly and negatively affecting our library.

Because privatization/outsourcing represents a monumental change to a City institution that has existed for more than a century before the current City Council majority came on the scene, and this is a wholesale change to how the most heavily utilized, public-facing portion of the City Government is managed, we propose asks the Voters this November what they want.

We propose two items for consideration in November:

- 1) A Charter amendment that would require a majority vote of the people if this or any future council seeks to make a wholesale change to the library's management structure – in the spirit of Measure C for our parks and beaches; and,

- 2) An advisory vote as to whether the current electorate of the City of Huntington Beach wants a change to the library's current management structure under the framework proposed by this Council at its March 19, 2024 meeting.

Because the election is less than six months away, we also request that the City Council table the requested and still uncirculated Request for Proposals (RFP) until after the people have spoken in November.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Direct the City Manager, City Attorney and City Clerk to prepare resolutions, ordinances, and any other materials necessary to place two items for consideration on the November 5, 2024 General Election ballot and agendize for a vote at our June 4, 2024 City Council Meeting:

- 1) A Charter amendment to require a majority vote of the City Council and a majority vote of the electors of Huntington Beach to approve any proposal that would change the wholesale management of the library, and/or any proposal to operate the library with a private contractor that would employ library staff to achieve cost savings; and,
- 2) An advisory vote of the electors of Huntington Beach on whether to hire a third-party contractor to operate the HBPL; a replacement of the current management structure, as proposed by the City Council at its March 19, 2024 meeting.

Additionally direct the City Manager to cease any further work on the Request for Proposals (RFP) as it relates to the action taken at the March 19, 2024 meeting.