



Social Distancing

Released April 30, 2020

- 1. PANDEMIC RESPONSE.** I want to thank all of you for your patience as we face this horrific challenge and change to our community. If you can remember, two months ago we were eagerly working on planning for facilities upgrades to branches throughout the urban areas and rebranding the District's message to better showcase our services. Then, on March 12, the Governor's State of Emergency declaration activated the District's Health & Safety Mitigation Taskforce (HSMT). This team is led by Asst. General Services Director **John Vino** and includes the following: Safety Manager **Nicole Baker**, Regional Library Operations Managers **Leo Segura** and **Carlotta Dickerson**, Asst. IT Director **Ron Melnar**, Systems and Network Supervisor **Gunnar Kim**, Asst. Branding & Marketing Director **Karen Bramwell**, Asst. Finance Director **Floresto Cabias**, Benefits Manager **Tricia Pavone**, and the **Executive Council**. The HSMT was instrumental in helping us close our branches and is currently developing procedures and training for a safe reopening.

We held a Special Board meeting on Tuesday, April 28 (originally planned as a Trustee Retreat to determine the pace and order of these remodels based upon preliminary cost figures) and unveiled to the Board the steps staff propose so that the District may reopen and move forward in the current economic environment. We presented to the Board the Phased Reopening Framework developed by Library Operations Administration (**Jenn Schember, Leo Segura, and Carlotta Dickerson**) and General Services Administration (**John Vino and Nicole Baker**). We have shared those same plans with the other three library systems in the county. We will post the Framework later tonight.

But, the most important information disclosed at the meeting was the financial forecast put together by our Financial Services team led by Deputy Director/Chief Financial Officer/Interim Human Resources Director **Fred James**. His staff worked nearly 24/7 to get their best estimates ready for this week's Board meeting. We couldn't even really plan without those estimates. **Fred** is a true hero. He warned me more than three years ago that we would have another economic dip. Of course, no one (not even Fred – imagine!) saw that something of this magnitude would hit us. It's like when I was in Texas and the local weatherman forecasted a "big storm" and then the coast was hit by Hurricane Katrina.

The General Fund budget for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 was reduced by \$5 Million, which is effective for two years due to lower projected revenues. Funding for the Capital Projects Fund comes from savings in the General Fund. The \$5 million reduction in revenues has essentially eliminated our potential savings in the General Fund, and, therefore, our ability to make transfers to the Capital Project Fund. So, for the next two years there will be no transfers to the Capital Projects Fund. Thus all work scheduled to be funded by the money in the Capital Projects Fund that can be delayed will be.

Because of **your** willingness to budget and spend conservatively (that is, not trying to spend every penny allocated for your projects), we will **only** be facing a **\$5 Million shortfall** this Fiscal Year. Yes, that's a lot of money, but it is a lot less than we feared it would be with the CTX (sales tax) comprising 35% of our Annual Budget and businesses being mostly closed for two+ months. And, most importantly, it gives us a plan to keep us from having to lay off staff. I have always stated that YOU (independently and collectively) are our greatest asset. We know we will need all our staff to meet the community challenges ahead.

At the Special Meeting, the Board voted to allow staff to approach the Teamsters 14 union to negotiate a *temporary* two-year hold on staff raises (merits and COLAs only), as of July 1, 2020 – not "suspending our entire contract" as happened in North Las Vegas and Clark County. These proposed union contract economic concessions, combined with management actions to freeze vacant positions, delay capital projects of the Master Plan, and suspend \$1 million in service contracts, would enable us to avoid immediate furloughs and/or layoffs.

With this vote, our Board recognized the benefit in what the EC was proposing and showed their commitment to providing the public with continued library services, their understanding of the hardships people are facing due to economic disruption, and their respect for staff. One trustee even had a way for our lower paid staff to gain from this.

Trustee **Brian Wilson** suggested that we should FURLOUGH employees at the lowest end of the pay scale and continue to cover their benefits. ("Furloughed" means that even though staff are not on the payroll, that is TEMPORARY and they are still affiliated with the District, with the expectation that they will be recalled when the timing is right). Trustee Wilson maintains furloughed staff would actually earn MORE with the combination of unemployment benefits coupled with the additional money from the Federal CARES ACT funds promised through July. I appreciate how much he cares for the staff and the District; I just had a problem with how slow that unemployment process has proven for people we know. This motion did not pass; Trustees chose to go with trying to negotiate those savings which Fred had projected.

I will keep you posted as revenue projections, "stay at home" orders, and community conditions change.

2. **WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS.** Our fabulous Board approved a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to extend the partnership between the District and Workforce Connections! At this time, when we are facing skyrocketing unemployment, this partnership (like that with Three Square) is even more important than before (if that's possible). Our next step calls for creating a business hub to support small businesses at Sahara West Library. We, obviously, don't have the funds to renovate that space. Instead, Workforce Connections has money set aside to accomplish the makeover, including relocating the spaces which staff and volunteers need at that locale.
3. **THREE SQUARE.** Have you seen broadcasts locally and from cities across the country of cars lined up for miles for food distribution? I have, too. So, while we are thinking about our partnerships with others who are dedicated to helping make people's lives better, I want to mention our food bank partner, Three Square. Currently, they are very busy distributing meals at various closed school campuses and we are just now entering into preliminary agreements about how we will collaborate as our library services are phased in. But one thing is decided. We will implement our *Food for Thought* program at reopening (whenever that occurs) and extend its duration for up to sixty days. While our customers feel good about the library, they feel better about helping others, and, they are making a difference. Once more, we have to thank our thoughtful and caring board! Community Engagement Director **Matt McNally** is brilliant in the ways he and his team have improved plans for how this process can have minimal impact on library operations while feeding the growing population of the hungry in Clark County.
4. **DELAY OF BRAND RELEASE.** Branding and Marketing Director **Betsy Ward** had released an Invitation to Bid with assistance from General Services Director **Steve Rice** and Purchasing and Administration Manager **Nancy Hodges**. On Monday, April 20, 2020, **Betsy** and her team were scheduled to select the low bidder, and this company would be

tasked with producing and installing interior and exterior signage for all 25 of our branches, in anticipation of our *Free To Be* brand launch in September 2020. However, based on guidance from the Trustees at their April 16 Trustee meeting, and internal discussions that I have had with **Betsy, Fred, and Steve**, we have decided that the timing isn't right to launch the new brand right now. The community has much larger concerns and we want to focus all of our EC and staff time and resources on helping local residents to get back on their feet. As the old saying goes, "If it's worth having, it's worth waiting for." This project is on hold.

- 5. ONLINE PROGRAMMING.** Bi-lingual videographer vendor Enrique Villar has been working to shoot content at the District's Family Pride Day, Kickoff to Kindergarten, the Comic Book Festival, and East Las Vegas Library opening in order to facilitate the realization of one of my goals, to develop video content for the District's online presence. Enrique's "sizzle" reels of these events and more live on our YouTube channel, which the BAM team had been working to rebuild and relaunch, along with the brand, in September. However, when our branches suddenly closed, BAM staff turned their sights to online programming, and urgently relaunched the District's YouTube channel.

Under the direction of Betsy Ward, the team working on this project is composed of: Senior Digital Projects Associate **Paula Loop**, Youth Services Manager and "Storytime Video Resident Expert" **Shana Harrington**, Graphic Designer **Juanita Aiello**, Digital Projects Manager **Ryan Simoneau**, and Assistant Branding and Marketing Director **Karen Bramwell**. The team conducted hours of research into publishers' copyright restrictions, reviewed best practices for developing and filming content from other libraries, and created a YouTube Content Filming Guide which provides staff with a clear direction moving forward (You will find it posted on the Staff Updates page and on Voyager in the BAM sections). Library Operations Director **Jenn Schember** and Community Engagement Director **Matt McNally** are now having their teams create fun, entertaining, and educational content for our YouTube channel, giving our customers the virtual library we've all envisioned. The joined teams have been working non-stop to get this going.

- 6. OUTLOOK.** Governor Steve Sisolak announced this week his affiliation with the Western Alliance. He joins the governors of California, Oregon, Washington, and Colorado in announcing they will make decisions on restoring services totally based upon science and NOT politics. The District will reopen upon the Governor's approval. Stay tuned!
- 7. KUDOS.** Kudos this month go to EACH AND EVERY STAFF MEMBER. You are holding on, maintaining social distancing, coping with grocery shortages, and handling everything else with aplomb.

We know that several staff members have lost family members during this time. If there are others of you going through rough periods, please let me know.

8. **YOUR DOSE OF BAD HUMOR** (If you aren't feeling in a humorous mood, please skip this section!)



"Sometimes to get more love, you have to give more love. So you have to ask yourself if it's worth it."

