

Council Meeting of
June 12, 2012

Honorable Mayor and Members
of the City Council
City Hall
Torrance, California

Members of the Council:

SUBJECT: Community Services – Accept and appropriate a \$77,420 donation from the Friends of the Torrance Library to fund various library programs.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation of the Community Services Director that City Council accept and appropriate a donation in the amount of \$77,420 from the Friends of the Torrance Library as follows: \$36,000 to fund the Torrance Public Library online homework assistance program, \$21,420 to fund adult library programming at the six Torrance libraries, and \$20,000 to launch an e-books service.

Funding

Funding in the amount of \$77,420 is available from a donation made by the Friends of the Torrance Library.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

In August 2006 the Library began offering online homework assistance with a grant from the California State Library. Later this service was funded by donations from Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center and the Friends of the Torrance Library.

Since 2006, the Library has used the services of Tutor.com. A staff analysis conducted in 2011 assessed other services on the market against the criteria required by Torrance Public Library. The criteria included “live” homework assistance seven days a week for grades K – 12, background checks for all tutors, and references from other public libraries. In the 2011 analysis, both Tutor.com and Brainfuse met the criteria so staff sought competitive quotes. Tutor.com was selected to continue providing the service.

For 2012, the Library once again conducted a survey of available services, and sought competitive quotes from Tutor.com and Brainfuse. Brainfuse provided a competitive quote for no limitations on the number of live sessions offered, while Tutor.com limited to service 4,500 live sessions for FY 2012-13. References from other public libraries for the service provided by Brainfuse were very positive.

Lack of available funding for programming has resulted in a lengthy partnership between the Friends of the Torrance Library and library staff to offer programs and events for the public. The Library has developed a reputation for providing educational programs to the public, one of the many expected elements in the Library's Plan of Service. Programs intended for adults are promoted on the Citywide Event Calendar, on the Library's web site, and to the Library's mailing list of over 3,200 people. Performances, lectures, films, craft programs, and seminars are often filled to capacity.

E-books are a rapidly growing and changing way to read. The past few years have seen intense competition among vendors, booksellers, and technology. This is now the most requested service that Torrance Public Library does not currently provide. Though there are sources for free e-books, users are expecting public libraries to offer popular e-books for loan in a way similar to physical print resources. In late 2011, staff studied the issue of how to bring e-books to Torrance. After reviewing many vendors, options, and costs the Library selected Baker & Taylor and their e-book platform Blio. This does not preclude Torrance from adding other vendors in the future, as funds permit.

During their board meeting on May 23, 2012, the Friends of the Torrance Library voted to: completely fund online homework assistance for FY 2012-13 for an amount not to exceed \$36,000; to continue funding adult programming at all six libraries with an amount not to exceed \$21,420; and to provide \$20,000 to support an e-book service contract with Baker & Taylor.

The Friends of the Torrance Library continue to provide essential monetary and volunteer support, enabling the Torrance Public Library to provide the outstanding services residents expect. Providing homework assistance, offering a wide range of programs, and providing reading material in a variety of formats are all essential elements of the Library's Plan of Service, and methods to serve the community.

The City Librarian and the Community Services Director therefore request that the City Council accept these three very generous donations from the Friends of the Torrance Library.

Respectfully Submitted,

JOHN JONES
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR



Hillary Theyer
City Librarian

CONCUR:



John Jones
Community Services Director



LeRoy J. Jackson
City Manager