



## Board Report

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**File #: 24-313, Version: 1**

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- a. Approve changes to open public hours for branch libraries effective September 30, 2024; and,
- b. Authorize Library Director to change the open public hours for branch libraries under the following conditions: total open public hours are not reduced or increased for the branch and minimum 30 days' notice to the public, unless emergency or other exigent circumstance; and,
- c. Authorize the Library Director to adjust or reduce open hours on a limited basis and as needed in response to an emergency, major service disruption, scheduled local events, inclement weather, road visibility challenges, or changes in schedule of local agencies impacting library use

### RECOMMENDATION:

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### SUMMARY:

Monterey County Free Libraries (MCFL) operates 16 branch libraries, with two more approaching construction. Each branch has a schedule of open public hours when the facility is staffed with core services available. A revision to the schedule of open public hours was last brought before the Board of Supervisors in 2017. This item is to revise the schedule of open public hours, and enable the Library Director to change the schedule within parameters and conditions.

### DISCUSSION:

#### **Background and Analysis**

Open public hours indicate the branch library is fully open to the public, staffed with MCFL staff, and core services are available. Core services include access to the physical collections for checkout or use in-house; access to public computers; access to printing, copying, and faxing services; access to sheltered physical space for use; access to a public restroom; and the ability to ask questions and receive assistance from MCFL staff.

Depending on the branch library, open public hours may or may not include specialized services such as library programs, access to special or restricted collections, or use of meeting rooms or study rooms. Services available outside of open public hours may include use of a community meeting room, pre-arranged visits from schools or other community groups, or library programs. MCFL staff typically arrive before open public hours to prepare the branch library for opening and to do other work in the branch.

If core services are not available during scheduled open public hours, staff and managers assess the situation and make a determination if the branch library is safe and suitable to open and operate. Core service may be

limited or unavailable the power is out, heating or cooling or utilities are compromised, connectivity is disrupted, water is not available, equipment is non-functional, the facility is damaged, or staffing constraints may limit assistance available.

Current open public hours are allocated as follows:

Seaside - 46 hours per week

Seaside is the only branch open on Mondays, serving the largest city within the MCFL service area, and is home to the Reference Services hub. This is the only branch library with two assigned Librarians.

Large Branches - 38 hours per week

Large branches have one assigned Librarian II.

These are located in Prunedale, Castroville, Marina, Carmel Valley, Buena Vista (Las Palmas), Gonzales, Soledad, Greenfield, and King City

Small Branches - 18 hours per week

Small branches are generally staffed by one 0.5 Library Assistant II, with occasional temporary assistance.

Each is managed by a hub branch (Prunedale, Seaside, or King City)

These are located in Aromas, Pájaro, Big Sur, San Ardo, and San Lucas.

A future branch is planned in East Garrison.

Very Small Branches - 8-12 hours per week

Very Small branches are staffed with less than 0.5 Library Assistant II, open limited hours and managed by the King City hub branch.

These are located in Parkfield and a future branch is planned in Bradley.

## **Changing Open Public Hours**

During 2023 and early 2024, the MCFL staff worked to assess existing open public hours. The proposed changes in open public hours are based on two time periods of public survey conducted in summer and fall, discussions with staff, assessment of physical library usage, safety considerations, library programs, and changes in schedules for complementary institutions or adjacent facilities. The current staffing level of each branch was taken into consideration, the staffing laws and policies regarding breaks and mileage, along with likelihood of supplemental staffing needed to maintain open hours. The changes made fall into the categories below:

1. Most proposed changes are to move from an evening shift (example 11-7) to a day shift (example 10-6). This is based on physical usage of the branch library, public survey results, and environmental considerations. In some cases, the exterior area of the branch is very dark, with no neighboring business or function that draws foot traffic after sunset.
2. Proposed changes to some branch libraries are to better align with an adjacent school for optimal options for class visits and student library use, taking into account school early dismissal days.
3. A small branch proposed change will ensure "hub" branches (Prunedale, Seaside, or King City) are open every hour the small branch is open. This will bolster safety, as small branches are largely staffed by as few as one person. Matching open hours will provide immediate phone call access for consultation or

assistance, rather than staff trying to reach a manager off hours.

4. As staff shortages limit service delivery to the public, all branches are operating on one shift so that staff are not spread out too thin, and staff are available to help cover a shortage at another location. During the last three years, MCFL has added two full-time “floater” positions (based in Seaside and King City) who are designated to cover staffing shortages at other branches. In addition, the planned purchase an additional vehicle based in King City will enable MCFL staff to more effectively get to remote areas to staff a branch library such as San Ardo and Parkfield, when coverage is needed.

### **Branches Changing Open Public Hours**

Aromas - 18 hours per week

Wednesday 1-6 (5)

Thursday 10-2 (4)

Friday 12-5 (5)

Saturday 10-2 (4)

Buena Vista - 38 hours per week

Tuesday 10-6 (8)

Wednesday 10-6 (8)

Thursday 10-6 (8)

Friday 10-5 (7)

Saturday 10-5 (7)

Carmel Valley - 38 hours per week

Tuesday 10-6 (8)

Wednesday 10-6 (8)

Thursday 10-6 (8)

Friday 10-5 (7)

Saturday 10-5 (7)

Castroville - 38 hours per week

Tuesday 11-7 (8)

Wednesday 11-7 (8)

Thursday 10-6 (8)

Friday 10-5 (7)

Saturday 10-5 (7)

King City - 38 hours per week

Tuesday 11-7 (8)

Wednesday 11-7 (8)

Thursday 10-6 (8)

Friday 10-5 (7)

Saturday 10-5 (7)

Parkfield - 8 hours per week

Tuesday 9-1 (4)

Thursday 2-6 (4)

Prunedale - 38 hours per week

Tuesday 10-6 (8)  
Wednesday 10-6 (8)  
Thursday 10-6 (8)  
Friday 10-5 (7)  
Saturday 10-5 (7)

San Ardo - 18 hours per week

Wednesday 11-4 (5)  
Thursday 1-5 (4)  
Friday 1-5 (4)  
Saturday 11-4 (5)

San Lucas - 18 hours per week

Wednesday 11-4 (5)  
Thursday 1-5 (4)  
Friday 1-5 (4)  
Saturday 11-4 (5)

Soledad - 38 hours per week

Tuesday 11-7 (8)  
Wednesday 10-6 (8)  
Thursday 10-6 (8)  
Friday 10-5 (7)  
Saturday 10-5 (7)

### **Branches Maintaining Same Open Hours**

Big Sur - 18 hours per week

Wednesday 2-6 (4)  
Thursday 2-6 (4)  
Friday 10-3 (5)  
Saturday 10-3 (5)

Greenfield - 38 hours per week

Tuesday 11-7 (8)  
Wednesday 11-7 (8)  
Thursday 10-6 (8)  
Friday 10-5 (7)  
Saturday 10-5 (7)

Marina - 38 hours per week

Tuesday 11-7 (8)  
Wednesday 11-7 (8)  
Thursday 10-6 (8)  
Friday 10-5 (7)  
Saturday 10-5 (7)

Seaside - 46 hours per week

Monday 10-6 (8)

Tuesday 11-7 (8)

Wednesday 11-7 (8)

Thursday 11-7 (8)

Friday 10-5 (7)

Saturday 10-5 (7)

### **Branches Maintaining Same Open Hours - for now**

Gonzales - 38 hours per week

Tuesday 11-7 (8)

Wednesday 11-7 (8)

Thursday 11-7 (8)

Friday 10-5 (7)

Saturday 10-5 (7)

The Gonzales branch library will move into the new Gonzales Community Center in 2025. This will put the branch on the other side of Highway 101, which will be much closer to local schools, more readily walkable for a new area of the community, and adjacent to the new City of Gonzales services. MCFL staff anticipates changes in library usage with this move and will assess optimal hours after the move once the community has a chance to use their new library and all the adjacent services and opportunities.

Pájaro - 18 hours per week

Tuesday 2-7 (5)

Wednesday 2-7 (5)

Friday 1-5 (4)

Saturday 12-4 (4)

The Pájaro branch library is closed temporarily due to flooding damage from March 2023. Reopening plans include reviving the entire Porter-Vallejo Mansion, which houses the branch, with a potential to bring in other agencies and services. As the open public hours are not currently available, MCFL staff will assess open public hours upon reopening to match community needs, in concert with other uses to best overlap or complement the facility. Prunedale, Pájaro's "hub" branch, is changing away from evening hours, which may result in the same change for this branch.

### **Hours for Future Library Branches**

The East Garrison branch library is projected to start construction in 2024, opening is anticipated by late 2025. To work with the community and develop services, MCFL plans to set the hours as follows:

East Garrison - 18 hours per week

Wednesday 2-7 (5)

Thursday 2-7 (5)

Friday 10-2 (4)

Saturday 10-2 (4)

The Bradley branch library is an active project, pending funding for construction. To work with the community and develop services, MCFL plans to set the hours as follows:

Bradley - 10.5 hours per week  
Tuesday 10-1:30 (3.5)  
Thursday 10-1:30 (3.5)  
Saturday 12-3:30 (3.5)

## **Conclusion**

MCFL staff are very gratified to see the positive public response to the survey. If able to open every location from 9-9, 7 days a week, MCFL may come close to meeting everyone's desires for open public libraries. With current budget and staffing levels, and adding two more facilities in the next few years, staff diligently evaluated the proposed open public hours.

The Library Director's request to have some authority will help MCFL respond to immediate needs and community requests. For example, if a local elementary school changes their early dismissal day, the Library Director could work with staff to similarly change a branch library's open public hours. This will ensure students are served in the most optimal way possible, without returning to the Board of Supervisors for formal approval. Communities could try different hours for an extended period to better determine if additional elements such as evening programs would work well in a community, or implement seasonal shifts if they served the community best.

While MCFL cannot prevent emergencies from impacting hours, a robust network of notifications is established, and with the elimination of overdue fines, people have less reason to try to visit a closed branch during a storm or when transportation is disrupted or not safe. In many cases, community members call the branch library to let MCFL staff know when a storm is coming, or other elements that may impact library use, long before official notification comes from the County through Library Administration. Local events such as the Carmel Valley Fiesta, Aromas Day, parades, and marathons can also temporarily disrupt library services. Staff who live locally and have experience on their commute corridors also often advise when roads may become impassable or hazardous. Limited adjustments are made from full closures to changing hours to daylight allowing all staff and patrons to get home before dark, to meeting needs of the Department of Emergency Management when a branch is designated as a Temporary Evacuation Point, Community Resource Center, or Cooling Center.

## OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

### FINANCING:

No additional funding is required for these changes.

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Public libraries offer a variety of services when open to communities throughout the County.

Economic Development  
 Administration  
 Health & Human Services

Infrastructure  
 Public Safety

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Attachments:  
Attachment A Library Hours September 2017