



GREATER GRIFFITH PARK NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
"Your Neighborhood. Your Voice. Your Council"

PO Box 27003
Los Angeles, CA 90027-0003



CERTIFIED COUNCIL #36

October 22, 2010

Honorable Eric Garcetti and Los Angeles City Council Members
Los Angeles City Hall
200 North Spring Street, Room 475
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear President Garcetti and Members of The City Council:

The Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council believes our libraries are the beating hearts of our communities. They serve as focal points and gathering places for all ages, especially in harsh economic times.

The recent closure of our branches on Mondays due to LA City budget cuts have robbed many in our communities of the essential tools to cope with the current recession.

A recent LA Weekly investigation ("City of Airheads: Villaraigosa dismantles L.A.'s vaunted library system" September 16, 2010) contains a number of startling and depressing facts and observations, none of which have been disputed by anyone from City Hall.

The investigation concludes that:

- 15,000 students visit one of the city's 73 branches every day. We would ask where do these kids go now on Mondays? Are they learning? Especially in low-income areas with high crime rates, are they safe?
- Los Angeles and Detroit are the only significant cities in the entire United States who have closed down their library systems twice a week.
- Reflecting the downturn in the economy visits to LA libraries rose from 16 million in 2007 to 17 million in 2009.

Assistant General Manager for LA City Libraries, Kris Morita says *it will cost \$10M to resume library services* on Mondays. We believe this would be possible by prioritizing and reallocating available funds:

- The Mayor's Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) program's

budget of \$26M was not cut. Recent reports have been unable to quantify the program's effectiveness (see Urban Institute report, which cost \$500,000, LA Justice Report and an Audit by City Controller Wendy Greuel). We do know that libraries serve as a neutral zone for thousands of at-risk kids in areas like South Central. We would ask \$850,000 be reallocated from the GRYD program.

- General City Purposes Fund (GCP). Each Councilmember has access to an apx. \$100,000 per annum special fund. This fund is allocated to various projects at the Councilmember's discretion. We would ask that each Councilmember agree to reallocate \$35,000. (15 x \$40,000 = 600,000)

- Special Funds/Discretionary Accounts. These are made up of oil pipeline franchise fees, street furniture and the Real Property Trust Fund (the sale of LA City property). We do understand that some of the monies contained in these accounts are controlled by bylaws and ordinances and already allocated to various District projects, but much is not (see City Controller Audit of Real Councilmember to reallocate \$100,000 (15 x 100,000 = \$1.5M total) from these discretionary funds.

- A July audit by the City Controller reveals LA City is owed more than \$500M in unpaid fines and fees. We would request that these monies are vigorously collected to help offset the massive City budget deficit and reopen libraries. We would request 1/4 % (\$1.25M) of this outstanding debt be allocated to libraries.

- A Daily News investigation reveals Mayor Villaraigosa spends \$7.4M a year on staff salaries, and Councilmembers have between 13 and 22 staff members each. LA City elected officials spend \$40M a year on personal staff (information obtained by the Daily News under the California Public Records Act). Some of these Councilmembers staffers are indeed paid from their district's Special Funds. We would ask Elected officials to downsize their personal staff by 10%, reallocating \$4M to our libraries.

- At the time of applying for a library card, individuals will be offered the opportunity to contribute to the library.

We look forward to progress on this.

Very Sincerely,



Ron Ostrow, President GGPNC
cc: Jessica Kornberg, Secretary
GGPNC Governing Board
City Council Members