

For immediate release. November 4, 2011

LIBRARY CUTS

At the monthly meeting of its board of Directors, the HYDE PARK-KENWOOD COMMUNITY CONFERENCE neighborhood association endorsed a recent letter by its affiliate committee, FRIENDS OF BLACKSTONE LIBRARY, and FOB officer Brenda Sawyer opposing the City Budget proposed cuts to libraries, and explaining why these cuts are detrimental to our city and its citizens.

We understand that our aldermen were among alderman who sent a letter to Mayor Emanuel expressing deep concerns about these and other cuts. Thank you. This was followed by a meeting with the city, at which the aldermen were told not only to offer substitute cuts or revenue but that, we understand, the city intends that at least some of the staffing cuts stand regardless of the library budget. The Conference is highly disappointed and urges that the aldermen who serve our neighborhood continue to work to prevent even more damage being done to our libraries, on top of damaging cuts to staff and hours last year.

Following is a (slightly revised) copy of the Friends of Blackstone Library letter which was sent to Ald. Burns and appeared in a recent issue of the Hyde Park Herald in October:

Mayor Emmanuel has presented his proposed budget before the City Council. With a \$637 million projected shortfall, the city is in for a rough ride. Initially it seemed that libraries had been spared with none slated for closing. But closer inspection of the budget revealed that major changes to libraries were coming. The budget included another reduction in hours in addition to the staggered schedule we currently suffer through and staff reductions, cuts that will directly impact each branch library in the system.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/ct-met-library-cuts-focus-20111025,0,2434094.story>

The mayor's office says this is better than closing branches but in fact with reduced hours and levels of service, the community will suffer. Hours at libraries were reduced in 2010 as branches went to a staggered schedule that resembled a maze and closing times that left children on the street at 6pm and shortened hours for programming. When pages (the staff that reshelves books and processes your holds) were eliminated in 2010, books remained unshelved and the time you waited for the material you put on hold went from 7 to 45 days. This is the wrong direction for our children and our communities. Our community must take action now.

Here's what you can do:

1. Contact the [your] alderman. Every branch in the system will be affected so if you receive this email and you're not in the 4th Ward (Ald. Will Burns, Ward04@cityofchicago.org), [or 5th ward, Ald. Hairston, lhairston@cityofchicago.org or Ward05@cityofchicago.org.] find your alderman's contact information and let him know that you want a fully functioning library, not just a shell.
2. Express your concern to local newspapers including the Hyde Park Herald (Letters@hpherald.com), the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Sun-Times.
3. If you're a blogger, let your support for quality libraries be known to your blog community.
4. Show your support on our blog www.friendsofblackstone.wordpress.com. Connect with us on Facebook.

We all need to support our libraries as centers of culture, knowledge, and access to tools that help us make the transitions that life is requiring of all of us in these times. Support libraries where we build and foster the type of society in which we want to live.

Sincerely,
Brenda P. Sawyer
Friends of Blackstone Library

www.friendsofblackstone.wordpress.com