

Ventura County Library

www.vencolibrary.org

Jackie Y. Griffin, Director

Christy Weir, Mayor
City of Ventura City Hall
501 Poli Street
Ventura, CA 93002-0099

November 13, 2009

Dear Mayor Weir:

I am writing to provide you with an update on budget issues and library service in the City of Ventura.

As you know, fourteen libraries in Ventura County, including the libraries in Ventura, are operated by the Ventura County Library under an MOU between six Ventura County cities, including Ventura and the unincorporated areas of Ventura County.

For several years, the property tax generated in the library service area for the City of Ventura has been inadequate to support two libraries. In previous years that deficit has been met by a variety of means. One year, local car dealers provided additional funding. On other occasions, the San Buenaventura Friends of the Library have stepped in to support the operational costs, as has the City itself.

In addition, the Ventura County Library has for many years provided additional funding to the City of Ventura libraries. These funds have come from state grants to the library system as a whole, county general fund contributions and property taxes from the unincorporated areas. Over the last several years the amount that the library system provided has increased. However, the City of Ventura property tax, which is dedicated to the library, has not kept up with the costs. As of FY09, Ventura County Library was providing \$280,000 to supplement the City of Ventura's budget.

While property taxes were rising and libraries were stable, the Ventura County Library was pleased to provide funding that allowed Ventura to have three libraries – one of which, the Avenue Library, is funded by money that the City of Ventura provides from a Community Development Block Grant.

When the Ventura County Library Commission met on February 5, 2009, it was clear that it was no longer possible for Ventura County Library to subsidize the City of Ventura's two libraries without cutting hours and services to other libraries in the system. Many of these cities provide additional funds, either through city general funds or parcel taxes to provide additional services to their residents. The Ventura County Library Commission did not favor cutting library services to those communities while continuing to support two libraries in

Ventura. The Ventura County Library Commission voted to recommend to the Ventura City Council, the San Buenaventura Friends of the Library and the Ventura Library Advisory Commission that they explore ways to meet the budget deficit of \$280,000.

As a result of subsequent discussions, San Buenaventura Friends of the Library took on the financial responsibility to keep the H. P. Wright Library open after the end of the fiscal year starting on July 1, 2009 and agreed with the City to maintain that commitment through November 30, 2009. Through truly extraordinary efforts, the San Buenaventura Friends of the Library have succeeded in meeting this commitment.

Meanwhile, the Ventura City Council placed a sales tax measure on the November 3, 2009 ballot that would have provided additional funding to the city libraries. This measure did not pass. Therefore, after November 30, 2009, no funding will be available to keep H.P. Wright Library open.

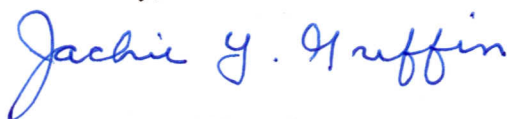
While it has been suggested by the Ventura Library Advisory Commission that both the H.P. Wright Library and the E.P. Foster Library be open on alternating days, there is no funding available to pay for the fixed costs of that option. In addition, in the past when this has been done, it proved unsatisfactory to the public.

Therefore, without further financial support from the City of Ventura in the amount of \$280,000 annually, the H. P. Wright Library will close as of November 30, 2009. We are preparing for the consolidation of the two libraries with collections and staff to be housed at the E.P. Foster Library. While staff will move on December 1, 2009, it will take several months to consolidate the two collections. At the time of actual consolidation it will be necessary to close E.P. Foster Library for two weeks to move shelving and unite the collections. At the end of this process, we believe that Ventura will have a stronger library with E.P. Foster Library being well-staffed with a robust collection. By consolidating, it is possible that there will be enough funding to open on Sundays.

The San Buenaventura Friends of the Library and Ventura Library staff are preparing an event that will honor Helen Wright and her wonderful contribution to the citizens of Ventura. They also want to recognize all those who have made it possible to have five additional months of library service through their extraordinary fundraising efforts. A celebratory Grand Opening will take place when the E.P. Foster Library consolidation is complete.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jackie Y. Griffin, Director Ventura County Library