

FY 2012 BUDGET POSITION PAPER

APRIL 2011

LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Overview

The City Manager's FY 2012 Recommended General Fund Operating Budget for the Department of Libraries and Information Services is \$4,888,491, which is an \$111,999 or 2.2% net reduction to the FY 2011 Adopted General Fund Operating Budget. This reduction is based on the commitment of maintaining the core library services of the existing branch libraries: Bailey, Grissom, Main Street, and West Avenue Libraries. The most significant single reduction in the proposed budget is the elimination of Bookmobile Services.

Issues

Bookmobiles have traditionally served neighborhoods or communities that either do not have a library or do not have easily accessible library facilities. In Newport News, the focus has evolved to serving areas that have economic and accessibility challenges such as Section 8 housing, day care centers, and senior apartment complexes. In addition, with only one branch library north of J. Clyde Morris Boulevard, Bookmobile Services provides support to citizens that are some distance from a library facility.

Bookmobile Services in Newport News began in FY 1973 with the purchase of a bookmobile vehicle at a cost of \$92,000. In 1978, an identified goal of Bookmobile Services was to provide services to children whose parents were unable to take them to a library branch. Among the justifications for continuing the bookmobile is the perceived encouragement the service provides for young children from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop literacy skills. A second targeted group is the elderly who may have difficulty reaching a regular library.

Early years of Bookmobile Services focused on the Southeast Community. By 1979 Bookmobile Services expanded to the central areas of the City. Use was high enough at the time to generate discussions of additional branch locations due to the demand for service. By 1984 the Bookmobile was replaced with a bookvan and focused primarily on deposit collections to nursing homes and institutions. Service continued to be provided by a bookvan until 1995, when a new bookmobile was purchased and put into operation for a cost of \$118,069.

In FY 2010, the Bookmobile was responsible for 2.4% of the total circulation for the Newport News Public Library System. In FY 2011, it is anticipated that it will represent

approximately 4% of the circulation total due to increased usage, an increased number of Bookmobile stops, and a general increase in library patronage (see table below for more detail).

Table 1 - Bookmobile Usage Statistics

Fiscal Year	Circulation	Reference	Visitor Count	Adult Users	Juvenile Users	Number of Stops
FY 2011 (Projected based on July-February data)	35,251	10,546	14,166	1,047	1,644	44
FY 2010	20,051	6,882	14,660	1,056	1,722	27
FY 2009	20,103	7,364	12,062	1,075	1,724	27
FY 2008	19,311	7,009	14,107	989	1,674	27
FY 2007	19,787	5,642	12,938	902	1,556	27
FY 2006	18,994	4,830	10,364	846	1,336	27

Source: NNPLS Annual Cumulative Statistics

The 2008 Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services' Guidelines indicates that 12 years is a reasonable life span for a bookmobile. Based on the repair and maintenance history of the Bookmobile, it is anticipated the current vehicle, which was purchased in 1995, would not need replacement until FY 2014. Due to the higher number of stops in the current fiscal year, the lifespan of the vehicle could be shortened. The anticipated replacement cost for a similar vehicle is \$185,000 to \$214,500 depending on the customization of the vehicle.

Table 2 - Vehicle History

Fiscal Year	Vehicle Equipment Lease	Vehicle Equipment Repairs	Vehicle Equipment Fuel	Auto Self-Insurance Premium	Total
FY 2011	\$3,642	\$7,273	\$4,722	\$330	\$15,967
FY 2010	\$7,582	\$3,703	\$3,413	\$339	\$15,037
FY 2009	\$7,820	\$10,831	\$4,562	\$321	\$23,534
FY 2008	\$8,297	\$7,741	\$5,038	\$192	\$21,268
FY 2007	\$7,507	\$5,607	\$3,430	\$191	\$16,735
FY 2006	N/A	\$8,192	\$3,603	\$162	\$11,957

Source: Adopted Operating Budgets for Fiscal Years 2007 to 2010

Fiscal Impact

Elimination of Bookmobile Services will result in the termination of two full-time employees. As established in the City's Reduction in Force Policy, the Department of Human Resources will work with these impacted employees to identify other employment opportunities within the City for which they are qualified (there are no

currently vacant positions within Libraries). If desired, further support would be made available to prepare these employees for an external job search.

Table 3 – Bookmobile Services Budget

Category	Amount FY 2011
Personnel (2 full-time Sr. Information Services Specialists)	\$75,585
Fringe Benefits	\$25,663
Vehicle Costs	\$15,967
Other Operating Costs	\$ 2,465
Total:	\$119,350

Source: Fiscal Year 2011 Adopted Operating Budget

Changing Circumstance

Newport News has changed drastically since 1973. What was once a targeted program for a small number of disadvantaged children and elderly citizens continues to serve only a small percentage of our citizens. While the segment of the population served by the Bookmobile is small, it is growing (increasing elderly population and increasing numbers of our school-age children now qualifying for free or reduced lunches). If the true purpose of the Bookmobile Service is to take care of the literacy needs of tens of thousands of our citizens, then it is clearly inadequate and would need to be expanded substantially to have a significant impact. No one has proposed that; nor does the City have the resources.

Many other local programs and services are also provided to those targeted populations. Such programs hardly existed in 1973. For example, Head Start, mandatory kindergarten, computer labs, and school reading specialists are all part of the service delivery system in 2011 for children. In terms of the elderly, many senior homes such as Mennowood, Warwick Forest, and the Chesapeake provide their own library. Many other elderly continue to live in their homes and have no greater access to the bookmobile than they would to one of our actual libraries.

Rapidly changing technology is another consideration. Even as for profit book stores are going out of business, the Bookmobile Services focus on hard copy materials and in contrast, our libraries are rapidly evolving into technology and multi-media centers.

Conclusion and Recommendation

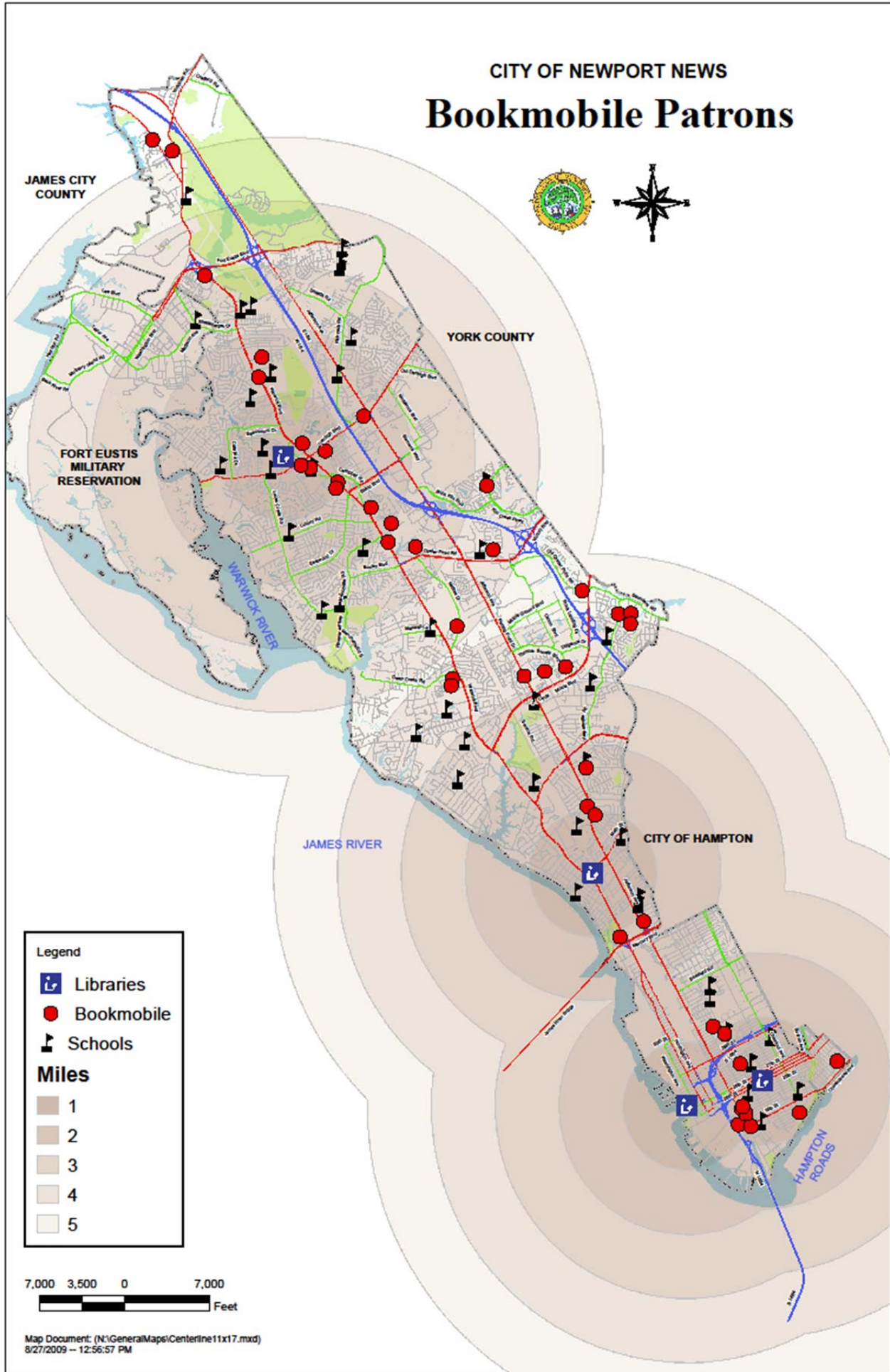
The analysis of the Bookmobile Services should not only focus on whether it is a good or bad activity, of course, it has positive attributes. The proper analytical question in terms of library services is what is the opportunity cost of providing the services?

If citizens and City Council believe that \$119,000 of additional funding should be restored to library services, how else could this money effectively be spent? Options could include restoring five-day-a-week services at the West Avenue Library, increasing services and hours at Pearl Bailey and Grissom, or increasing the materials budget for the library system.

Local government faces the continual challenge of balancing demands for services against available resources and revenues. During times of economic downturn, options for meeting this challenge become very limited. Revenue constraints force the consideration of the reduction or elimination of valued services, which must be evaluated on a cost-benefit basis.

The information within this report offers clear evidence that the Bookmobile provides a valued service to our community. It is also important to recognize that its targeted population is small and alternatives for similar service have expanded. Balancing the marginal value of the Bookmobile Service against other needs throughout the City, and considering the need for near-term replacement of the Bookmobile vehicle, this service is recommended for elimination in the FY 2012 budget.

CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS Bookmobile Patrons



Legend

- Libraries
- Bookmobile
- Schools

Miles

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

