Resolution Declaring September 2018 as Library Fine Amnesty Month

At the recommendation of the Library Advisory Board, the County Library Director requests approval of a fine amnesty program for September 2018. This program will allow residents to return books and other items without further penalty and to clear their accounts, so that these members may use the library again. This amnesty will run from September 1 through September 31, 2018. It is expected that about 15 percent of library card holders will take advantage of this one-time event.

Fiscal Impact:

Approximately $600 to $1,300 in fines and fees will be waived resulting in a loss of revenues.

Personnel Impact:

None.

Action Requested:

Approve the resolution and authorize the Chair to sign.

Administrative Office Review: Sang Kim, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
MEMORANDUM

Date: Thursday, July 19, 2018
To: Board of Supervisors
From: Mel Lightbody, County Librarian
RE: Fine Amnesty for September of 2018

Summary. Upon the recommendation of the Library Advisory Board, the Library is proposing a month-long fine/fee amnesty program to celebrate National Library Card Sign-Up Month and to welcome users back to the library. The library expects a participation rate of up to 15% and to waive between $600 and $1,300 in fines. Staff expect the department to receive or have replaced up to 200 items. These estimated numbers are based on a survey of other California libraries that conducted fine amnesty periods.

Goals. There are three overarching goals of doing an amnesty program for the County Library:

1. Getting folks who owe fines back into the library, especially those who had fines accrued when they were juveniles.
2. Advertise the library and its services and open hours.
3. Get overdue materials back or have them replaced.

Estimated amount of amnesty waivers: Butte County Library collects roughly $1,000 weekly across all the branches.

Staff estimated the maximum to be waived during this period would be $2,000 or a 50% response rate. Staff estimation of likely amount waived is much less: $600 to $1,300 based on other California library experiences.

Blocked Library Cards. The Library has 3,352 active (unexpired) patrons whose accounts are blocked because they owe more than $10 in fines. Of this number 986 hold juvenile cards. While the average fine owed is $62.59, this average amount reflects a few outliers pulling this average dollar amount higher. Half the juvenile cards owe less than $25.
California Libraries Survey. Staff surveyed several California libraries regarding their Amnesty program. Amnesty period ranged from a low of one week (Hillside Library) to six weeks (San Francisco Library).

In addition to waiving fines associated with returning a lost book, Santa Cruz libraries allowed up to $20 in simple overdue fines to be waived if a patron returned to the library and requested the removal. Long Beach Public Library allowed a replacement of any lost book with an acceptable new/nearly new book.

San Francisco saw about a 5% response rate to its highly publicized amnesty program, other libraries were between 5% and 25%.

Libraries responding uniformly stated that their program was very successful. San Francisco Library published a report on their success, which is available to any member of the public interested. Butte County Library will provide a report which will also be available to interested parties.

Conclusion. With sufficient publicity and proactive work by front-line staff, the library expects to welcome back many users to the library and to have library materials returned.
RESOLUTION DECLARING SEPTEMBER 2018 LIBRARY FINE AMNESTY MONTH IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL LIBRARY CARD MONTH

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors established the Butte County Library fees and fines on April 22, 2008 by ordinance, approved the Butte County Master Fee Schedule by resolution on March 24, 2009, and amended the Master Fee Schedule over time; and

WHEREAS, there are 3,352 patrons, including 986 juveniles, who are precluded from borrowing library materials due to overdue library material fines; and

WHEREAS, for low income patrons, overdue Library material fines can present a significant economic barrier, and the major impact of such economic barrier is to deny Library materials to children; and

WHEREAS, amnesty programs for overdue Library materials give patrons the opportunity to return usable Library materials, making them available to the public again; and

WHEREAS, Library patrons who take advantage of amnesty can restore their Library privileges and regain access to Library materials for themselves and their children; and

WHEREAS, a resolution is required to establish the fine amnesty program for the library for September of 2018,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Butte County Board of Supervisors hereby adopt this resolution to permit a waiver of a patron’s accumulated overdue library fines from September 1 through September 30, 2018 in honor of National Library Card Sign-Up Month.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Butte County Board of Supervisors this 24th Day of July 2018, by the following vote:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSENT:
NOT VOTING:

________________________________
Steve Lambert, Chair
Butte County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:
Shari McCracken, Chief Administrative Officer
and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: ______________________________
Deputy