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CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

Date: March 21, 2022

To: Mark F. Miller, City Manager

From: Robert J. Bruner, Assistant City Manager
Emily M. Dumas, Library Director

Subject: Department Report: Troy Public Library Eliminating Late Fines

Troy Public Library will officially eliminate late fines on most materials beginning on April 3, 2022. The practice of not collecting late fines was first put into place in March 2020 to reduce burden on the community during the forced closure caused by COVID-19. This policy was extended during the reopening transitional period, and remains in place today.

Many libraries across the country have implemented fine free policies over the last decade, and data continues to demonstrate that eliminating late fines frequently increases rates of returned materials, encourages borrowers to return to the library, allows for more positive patron and staff interactions, and does not lead to increased lost or stolen materials. In the two years that Troy Public Library has ceased collecting late fines the library has not seen increased wait times for materials on holds, nor any significant increase in lost or long overdue materials.

The decision to move to a fine free institution was made in an effort to achieve the following goals:

- Encourage patrons to readily use the library.
- Foster good will with the community.
- Create a positive, rather than punitive, association for the library with our patrons.
- Cultivate an atmosphere where staff can concentrate on improving customer service and providing positive interactions with our community.
- Eliminate any budgetary burden on patrons, as fines will no longer be a source of revenue (patrons already support the library through its dedicated millage).
- Continue a policy that has been in practice for two years (due to the building closure) which has been shown to work well.

Fine free means that Troy Public Library will no longer assess late fines for most items that are overdue. However, late fines will still be collected for the HITs collection, Kindles, Mobile Hotspots, and Interlibrary Loan items through MeLCat. Due dates and return policies will still apply. If an item does not have a hold on it, it will be automatically renewed up to three additional times. If an item is on hold it is not eligible for renewal and needs to be returned. If an item reaches its due date plus 15 days, it will be marked as lost, and the patron's borrowing privileges will be frozen until the item is replaced, or the borrower pays a replacement fee for the material plus any additional processing fees.