



# Free or fee library?

## \$10 library card charge city puzzle

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### HUNTINGTON BEACH —

An unprecedented proposal to charge a \$10 fee for a city library card will go before the City Council Monday night.

The proposal was drafted by the city Community Services Department as part of a program undertaken by all departments to find ways of increasing city revenue, said Community Services Director Vince Moorhouse this week.

The proposal has drawn fire, however, from the city Library Board, which advises the council on library matters, and from the Friends of the Library, which raises money and provides volunteers for library operations.

The Library Board went on record last year as unanimously opposed to a library card fee.

Dorothy Boesch, president of the Friends of the Library, said Thursday that her organization has always opposed such a fee because "we already, as citizens, have paid for the library through taxes."

Further, said Boesch, "People who can least afford (a fee) will be hardest hit, and they need the library most."

Boesch added that "we already have to pay for just about everything at the library except the books...and I can see why. But, I think when it comes to books, they're the basis for our civilization. That's how we become civilized, by reading books. (A card fee) would deprive some people of access (to books)."

**OPPONENTS OF** the fee also point out that its adoption would make the city library system ineligible for state library monies and that a bill signed by Governor Jerry Brown last week could mean \$200,000 in such state funding per year to the city system, which currently receives about \$40,000 per year from the state.

Moorhouse defended the proposal, however, saying it is projected to raise about \$200,000 per year in revenue. As for the bill that became law last week, Moorhouse said that the Legislature still must vote to actually spend the money in next year's state budget, and this is far from assured.

"It is not our intention to

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lay any great burden on anybody," Moorhouse stated. He said that those who argue against the fee on the grounds that libraries should be free are basing their argument on "a misconception."

"They should (be free) if people are going to go to the library and read books," he explained. "But, if you take books out...it costs money to process books in and out....The taxpayer ultimately pays for that."

**AT ANY RATE**, Moorhouse pointed out, "the ultimate decision is with the City Council."

Councilwomen Ruth Bailey and Ruth Finley have spoken against the idea of a card fee in

the past and both indicated this week that they still oppose it.

"The projections (of income from fees) are iffy; there's no way of really knowing," Bailey said, expressing concern over the potential loss of state money.

Councilman Don MacAllister said Friday that he supports the idea of a card fee as a means of raising money for the library, adding, "It's not a very popular stand, I know....I am aware of the emotionalism on the issue."

MacAllister also said he does not believe the council will approve the plan Monday night.