



CITY OF CONCORD

Report to Council

FROM: Todd Fabian, Library Director

DATE: July 16, 2026

SUBJECT: Concord Public Library Trustees and Library Fines

Recommendation

The Concord Public Library trustees recommend the following: “to suspend fines for all overdue library materials for one year, with data collection and regular reporting during the year to the library board on the impact of eliminating fines, with the issue to be reviewed after 1 year, and a permanent recommendation to be made thereafter to the City Council.”

Background

The Concord Public Library manages a variety of Non-Ordinance based Fees and Fines. These include overdue charges on any number of circulating materials, ranging from audiobooks and bestsellers to items in the Library of Things. Fines were paused at the start of the covid-19 pandemic and were reactivated after a few years due to an increase in overdue, missing and lost items. However, based on the complexity of the pandemic’s impact on library services, we do not feel that we can trust data collected during this period as optimal in guiding future decisions.

Discussion

Based on the experiences and data of other libraries that have paused/eliminated overdue fines, it is likely that pausing fines at CPL would bring patrons back into the library who have potentially stayed away due to the accrual of fines, or even the stigma of fines. What remains unknown, due to a lack of empirical data in the field, is the potential long-term impact that suspending fines would have on the punctuality of item returns, as well as the ensuing effect on subsequent patrons’ wait times. A temporary fine suspension would allow library staff to gather accurate data, allowing for a more educated recommendation on a permanent policy change in one year. If this pause is instituted, the library would still charge patrons for the replacement of damaged/lost materials and pause library card access until they are back in good standing (i.e. all overdue items are returned). Pausing library fines would result in a revenue loss of approximately \$15,000 per year to the City.

cc: City Manager