

DATE: August 21, 2023

TO: Board of Library Trustees

FROM: Melvyn Yabut, Assistant Library Director

SUBJECT: **Proposed Revisions to the City of Mountain View Library Group Study and Program Room Use Policy**

INTRODUCTION

The City of Mountain View Library Group Study and Program Use Policy (Policy) was adopted by the Board of Library Trustees on July 15, 2002 and last revised on September 16, 2019. The Policy sets the guidelines for the use of the Mountain View Public Library's group study rooms and program rooms and the terms of service and responsibilities of the users of the group study rooms.

The Library only has 10 group study rooms of varying capacities. Study room use is an important service that the Library offers as it provides users with a venue to do group study or project planning without disrupting other Library customers. It is a popular service. In the last fiscal year, 5,925 users had a combined total of 10,829 bookings with an average booking duration of 94 minutes.

Due to the popularity of this limited resource, Library staff continually assesses the processes in providing the service that it be equitable, efficient and easy to use for users. Library staff piloted a process that reduces the grace period, offers the option of booking users at the desk, and offers issuance of Library cards at the second-floor desk to provide an equitable, efficient and easy-to-use process of room reservations. However, there are user practices Library staff have observed that create undue advantage or impact other users' access.

It would be supportive of Library customers and staff if the current Policy is revised to reflect these changes to the process and address these practices that creates undue advantage to some.

Library staff proposes revisions to the Policy to meet the following objectives:

- Align the Policy with current processes that staff piloted to address inequalities.
- Remove statements on the Policy that contradict other guidelines on the Policy.

- Align the Policy to be supportive of equitable access by all users.
- Remove redundant statements on the Policy.
- Revise and move sections to simplify and clarify.

SUPPORTING STATEMENTS FOR PROPOSED CHANGES

Grace Period

The current Policy allows groups to be 15 minutes late before they lose their reservation. Many of these reservations resulted in no-shows that tie up the rooms when they could be offered to others.

In October 2022, Library staff launched a pilot of reducing the grace period from 15 minutes to five minutes so that rooms are available sooner and Library staff can offer them to other users. Library staff also revised the confirmation email informing them of the reduced grace period and encouraging users to cancel their booking online, by phone, or in person if they no longer need the room. Library staff was also proactive in monitoring bookings and canceling them past the appointed time so these rooms can then be offered to walk-ins. The result of the pilot was an increase in cancellations coupled with an increase in confirmations, pointing to the ability of Library staff to offer the room to users who inquire at the desk in the event of a no-show.

Library staff proposes that the Policy be revised to change the grace period from 15 minutes to five minutes.

Practices that Create Undue Advantage to the Detriment of Other Users

Some users of the group study room extend their use of the room beyond the maximum of two hours per day per group by splitting their reservation and adding a half-hour gap between reservations. This practice results in extending their time to an extra half-hour more than the maximum of two hours as other users are less likely to book a room for half an hour. Moreover, the current Policy allows the user to stay in the room until another group arrives to use the room (see bullet on Page 3 of the Policy), causing difficult interactions with Library staff if they are asked to leave the room. This practice of adding gaps and the fact that the current Policy allows groups to stay when there are no bookings gives some users undue advantage to the detriment of other users.

Some groups extend their use of the room by having other group members book the room without any change in the composition of the group. If all members of a group of three book the room, then they would have use of the room for up to six hours in a day. This creates an undue

advantage to the detriment of others and abuses the spirit of the Policy. This practice also violates the spirit of the Library Behavior Policy of prohibiting the monopoly of spaces. Calling the attention of these users often ends up in challenging interactions for Library staff and disrupts others. Library staff proposes that the Board of Library Trustees specify on the Policy that the two-hour maximum applies to all individuals of the group, regardless of the account used for the original booking.

Library staff proposes the following:

- Add to the Policy that: “A group is not allowed to extend their reservation by adding half-hour gaps between bookings.”
- Add to the Policy that: “The maximum of two hours per day per group applies to all individuals of the group, regardless of the account used for the original booking.”
- Remove from the Policy that: “A group using a study room may stay beyond their reservation until another group arrives to use the room.”

PROPOSED CHANGES SUMMARY

1. Amend the Policy name to reflect the correct name of the Library and to add “room” after “group study” to differentiate the group study rooms from the two Library program rooms.
2. Remove purpose of study room use. The name of the room already establishes its general use, and the Policy specifies activities that are restricted.
3. Remove redundancies in the description of the group study rooms.
4. Add “a table and chairs” to statement on what each room offers.
5. Add “by phone” or “in person” as other ways to reserve or cancel a booking.
6. Move the policy on use of Program Rooms as a subsection under the POLICY section as the Policy governs the use of two types of rooms: study rooms and the program rooms.
7. Incorporate the subsection on Registering under the Using the Group Study Rooms subsection.
8. Reduce the section on REGULATIONS to use “Using the Group Study Rooms and Responsibility.”

9. Add specific language to inform the user of what happens to unattended items after a period of time. Add to the Policy that: "If the room is left unattended for more than 10 minutes, the booking may be canceled, and unattended items will be brought to the Accounts desk on the first floor of the Library."
10. Add to the Policy that: "Bookings should be canceled if no longer needed. Reservations can be canceled online, in person, or by calling 650-903-6887. Reservations not claimed within five minutes of their start time will be canceled."
11. Add to the Policy that: "A group is not allowed to extend their reservation by adding half-hour gaps between bookings."
12. Add to the Policy that: "The maximum of two hours per day per group applies to all individuals of the group, regardless of the account used for the original booking."
13. Remove from the Policy that: "A group using a study room may stay beyond their reservation until another group arrives to use the room."

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- Attachments:
1. City of Mountain View Library Group Study and Program Use Policy (redline)
 2. City of Mountain View Library Group Study and Program Use Policy