

# Scenic Regional Library requires masks, reduces hours

The Scenic Regional Library Board of Trustees voted unanimously (13-0) at their November 17 meeting to require all patrons to wear face masks in their facilities. The new policy took effect Friday, November 20.

The decision was based on staff input, dramatically-rising new COVID cases, and soaring positive testing rate in the area.

The library will offer a disposable face mask to patrons without one.

The library recently conducted a staff survey and 74% of front line employees responded that they would like to see the library require face masks and were willing to enforce the new policy. When the same survey was conducted in August, only 50% of the staff wanted the library to require the public to wear masks at the time.

Since reopening in June, the library strongly encouraged patrons to wear masks in its buildings to protect staff and other visitors. However, only about half of library patrons have been wearing masks.

Many public libraries

and national retail chains in the state have been implementing mask requirements to protect their front line employees and other customers.

## Reduced hours

Due to ongoing staffing shortages related to illnesses, COVID-19, and quarantines, all Scenic Regional Library branches will have new, reduced service hours beginning Monday, November 30. The new hours at all locations will be:

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays — 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Tuesdays and Thursdays — 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The changes will temporarily reduce the library's services hours from between 57 and 61 hours a week at each location to 45 hours. The library trimmed hours which historically have been their lower-traffic times.

The library hopes that the reduction of service hours will help reduce the number of times that branches will need to be completely shut down in the coming months due

to staffing shortages from illness and quarantines.

The new service hours will not alter the library's protocol when an employee at a branch tests positive for COVID-19. When a library employee tests positive for coronavirus, the branch is closed temporarily and other staff at the location are asked to quarantine. The closures also guarantee that enough time has passed for the virus, which can remain alive on surfaces for several days, to die.

The library has had six employees test positive for COVID-19 and have had dozens of other employees quarantined due to exposure either at work or outside of work.

The new service hours will not result in any library staff having their hours reduced or being laid off. The change will allow the library to cover fewer service hours with the same amount of staff, which will provide a buffer against staff call-ins due to illness and quarantines.

The Library Board will revisit these new service hours at their regular meetings each month, beginning in January.