

Date of approval of letter

Re: The Harte Library and loss of usage during FBISD school year

Dear Mayor Guajardo and Members of the Corpus Christi City Council,

We are writing to you because of our concern about the applicability and reasonability of the restrictions imposed on the Harte Library in Corpus Christi, as a result of interpretation of legislation enacted in 2023. In reaction to the 2023 legislation, a decision was made in 2025 to modify the hours that the public could access the Harte library building on the grounds of the Flour Bluff High School, relying on an interpretation of legislative requirements for safety of the students. This interpretation, which we think may be in error, has resulted in a vastly diminished usage of this facility by the public, particularly those in District 4. It also changes the consideration the Harte donors thought they were achieving by their gift: the library has essentially become an arm of the school by default, not a gift to the community. If continued, the damage to the community and the frustration of the gift of the Hartes will continue. The current schedule imposed on the library enforces exclusion of the public during school hours. Please see the attached internal memo and accompanied hours for more information regarding the restricted use. That means, the general public can not enter the premises, check out books, read newspapers, or enjoy the use of the internet for business or personal enjoyment. In addition, the collateral comforts our libraries have provided such as weather protection during hot or cold months, shelter during rainy or stormy days is lost for the adults excluded under this interpretation. In general, various legislations have been referenced as grounds for the restrictions to "an educational facility". An initial inquiry must be made whether the Harte Library is an "educational facility" covered by this legislation? As defined in Texas Education Code (TEC) §46.001, "any real property, improvement, or necessary fixture predominantly used for teaching curriculum under TEC §28.002" is an "educational facility." It does not include facilities part of correctional institutions, higher education, medical, or social services providers not controlled by the school system. Based on these definitions, it is possible this legislation does not apply to the Harte facility. The library is not "part of a curriculum" and "is not controlled by the school system." In the event this position is correct, the result would be to return the use of the Harte library to its prior open-door status since the legislation would not apply. We also have been informed that city staff have authorized a study of architectural changes (at a current cost of \$15,000) that might be undertaken in the library to in effect segregate students from the public, allowing joint use of the premises. However, if it is determined that it is applicable, there may be sound challenges to the interpretation presently being imposed, or perhaps a contractual work around in the existing documents that created the gift of Janet Harte Library that may be effective in solving this dilemma. We invite the mayor and city council to further discuss possible outcomes and concerns regarding the Janet Harte Library. Currently the library advisory board meets the first Tuesday of the month at 10:30 at La Retama. Our meetings are not currently video live streamed or video recorded.

We anticipate your response,
City of Corpus Christi Library Advisory Board