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Patron-friendly Food Policy at New Lafayette Library

By Cathy Tyson

A cup of coffee with a lid is fine, granola bars are acceptable, but don't even think about bringing in a garlic and pepperoni pizza or gin and tonic to the new Lafayette Library and Learning Center when it opens in mid-November. The City Council recently approved a fairly generous food and drink policy, in part because the building will feature a small, 273 square foot cafe space, and to make the library more patron-friendly. Odor is one problem with pizza, potentially bothering other patrons, also the grease factor, smudging library materials. No one wants a slimy thumb-print on a shiny new copy of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

"We recommend that the Council adopt a policy that allows non-alcoholic beverages in closed containers and allows non-greasy or non-odiferous food that is in a container," said Mayor Don Tatzin and Farzaneh Sanders in a memo to the City Council.

Due to Health Department regulations, no cooking can occur in the cafe but preparation of foods, like a sugar free vanilla latte, turkey sandwich, or salad is permitted.

In order to come up with a policy, volunteers with the Library Foundation have spent a considerable amount of time and effort looking at food policies at libraries around the country. "A nationwide survey of libraries revealed that all allow drinks in closed containers except in areas with irreplaceable documents, and for some libraries, with computers" summarized Tatzin and Sanders.

"The Miami-Dade Public Library allows food and drink. We have cafes at several libraries. It has not been a problem. We restrict drinks if you are using the computers. It is a good thing," said Sylvia Mora-Ona, Assistant Director, Miami-Dade Library.

"Yes, we allow food and drink except in certain areas...It is working great. It allows downtown workers, for example, to take their lunch to the library and enjoy a book or newspaper and then browse the collection," said Greg Mickells, Assistant Library Director, Lincoln City Libraries, Nebraska.

The building is scheduled to be substantially completed by October 1 at which time books and furniture can be moved in. The official grand opening is on November 14th.

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