City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL **DATE: DECEMBER 13, 2022**

FROM: CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE **WARDS: ALL**

SUBJECT: LANGUAGE ACCESS AND TRANSLATION SERVICES UPDATE - SPANISH TRANSLATION OF CITY COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETING BROADCASTS AND AGENDAS

ISSUE:

Provide an update on available options to expand language access for Limited English Proficiency persons through Spanish translation of City Council and Committee meeting broadcasts and agendas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Provide input and guidance to expand language access for Limited English Proficiency persons through the Spanish translation of City Council and Committee meeting agendas; and

2. Provide input and guidance to expand language access for Limited English Proficiency persons through automated Spanish captions of City Council and Committee meetings; and

3. Provide further direction as the Council deems appropriate on in-person interpretation options for City Council and Committee meetings.

BACKGROUND:

On May 5, 2021, the Inclusiveness, Community Engagement, and Governmental Processes Committee (ICGC) received a report outlining the language preferences spoken in Riverside, current translation activities throughout the City, and potential options to continue to expand language access for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons. Following discussion, staff were requested to research costs and implications for translating the audio of Council and Committee meetings, agendas, materials, and Riverside Police Department business and application materials.

On July 7, 2021, ICGC received an update on the translation options previously identified, including estimated costs. Following the discussion, the Committee requested staff reassess other less expensive meeting audio translation service for video feed and report back to the Committee for further discussion and look at other translation options as needed.

On October 6, 2021, ICGC received and ordered filed an update regarding options for the implementation of translation of City Council and Committee meeting audio translation of video feed and translation of meeting agendas and materials. Following discussion, the Committee requested staff complete a financial analysis by test piloting agenda translation services and requested a presentation on the application process.

On September 7, 2022, ICGC received and ordered filed an update regarding options for implementation of automated Spanish captioning of City Council and Committee meeting broadcasts, Spanish translation of Agenda's, and in-person translation options. Following discussion, it was moved by Chair Cervantes and Vice Chair Perry to move forward with translation of all City Council and Committee Agendas; move forward with implementation of automated Spanish captions; and direct staff to refer any language access and translation service recommendations selected to the full City Council for discussion.

DISCUSSION:

Riverside Demographics

The City of Riverside has a population of 317,000 (as of July 1, 2021) based on the US Census Bureau's 2021 American Community Survey. According to the Survey, languages spoken at home are depicted in the table below:

English	Spanish	Asian & Pacific Islander Dialects	Other Indo-European Dialects	Other Languages
54%	37.6%	5%	2.2%	1.3%

Of the 37.6% of Riverside residents surveyed that identified Spanish as their primary language spoken at home, 31.1% (34,892) of those self-identify as speaking English less than "very well." Based on the statistics it is clear that the largest population within the City that is in need of expanded language access is the Spanish speaking community.

Current Practices in City of Riverside

With respect to City Council and Committee meetings, there is no formal policy in place to provide translation services for meetings. Spanish interpretation has been provided, upon advance request to the City Clerk's Office, on several occasions for City Council meetings anticipated to have a large number of Spanish speaking participants. The Office of Communications does not currently provide any Spanish translation services for meeting broadcasts but has integrated in-person Spanish interpretation with virtual meetings broadcasts when provided.

Current Practices in Neighboring Cities

Staff has looked to other cities in the Southern California region to review best practices as it relates to language access at City Council and Committee meetings. There are multiple other Cities in the Southern California region that provide in-person Spanish interpretation at City Council meetings as well as Agenda translation.

Neighboring cities have implemented various forms of translation and interpretation of agendas and meetings, but none have been found to provide comprehensive language access for both City Council and Committee meetings. The following practices that are currently underway by neighboring cities and could be adopted to address Riverside's needs are as follows:

- City Council and commission meeting agendas include a standardized statement, in the languages designated, that the agenda or specific items of interests are available for translation upon request
- "Accessible Agenda" link on meeting calendar that allows for automated agenda translation through Google Translate (requires specific browser settings)
- Contract professional in-person Spanish interpretation of all City Council meetings only. Two separate web streams for virtual viewers
- Make headphones available to in-person attendees if a community group provides the translator
- Automated captioning of meeting video feeds

Agenda Translation

As directed by ICGC, the City Clerk's Office facilitated a test pilot phase that translated the City Council meeting agendas into Spanish for a trial period using a 3rd party translation service. Council Committee agendas were not included in the trial. The average cost for translating the agenda was $220 per meeting, for an estimated annual cost of approximately $10,600 for 48 City Council meetings. The cost identified from the trial period did not include translation services for revised agendas, which would result in an increase of both translation service levels and costs.

Factors to be considered beyond the cost include the average 2-business-day vendor turnaround which resulted in delayed posting of Spanish agendas on Tuesdays (only 7 days before the meeting). Additionally, when agendas were revised, there was not sufficient time to re-submit the revised agenda for translation to ensure timely posting prior to the meeting. To promote equal access, staff recommends seeking a solution to provide for an automated translation of agendas to ensure quicker posting of agendas in conjunction with the English agendas. Free services such as the Google Translate widget or Microsoft Word Translate feature facilitate translation but do not function in conjunction with the agenda publishing software, Granicus. Staff needs to further investigate a solution for the posting of the agenda in conjunction with the Spanish captioned video on the website calendar page where all meeting agendas are posted for centralized access.

Automated Spanish Captions

The previously recommended system to provide caption automation, Link Electronics, recently released a software update. The update would allow for the automated captioning system (ACE) to translate English captions into Spanish captions without the need for additional ongoing web streaming services and costs. The purchase of Links Electronics hardware would include a one-time cost of roughly $45,300 and could be funded through existing Public, Educational, and Government Access (PEG) funds.

Additional factors to be considered in implementing Spanish captions include the requirement for a second, entirely separate live stream. An independent link for members of the public wishing to view the live feed with Spanish captions would be provided. Implementation of Spanish captions would require one of the following formats:

1. Provide the Spanish stream with English audio and Spanish captions.
2. Provide no audio with Spanish captions.

In-Person Interpretation Services

To host live in-person Spanish interpretation at meetings, a minimum of two in-person interpreters must be in attendance during each meeting. Multiple local vendors provided estimates ranging from $80 to $150 per hour, per interpreter. Based on estimates previously calculated, interpretation costs for an average City Council meeting would be $1,278 each and Committee meetings are estimated at $420 each. Two options exist for implementing in-person Spanish interpretation.

1. Add notice to all Agendas allowing for in-person interpreters upon request with 3 business day advanced notice.
2. Provide interpreters at all City Council and Committee meetings.

Throughout the past year, several City Council and Committee meetings were held that included live Spanish interpretation. Public comments during these meetings were facilitated by two public comment phone lines, one in Spanish, one in English. Each had a live interpreter on the line to translate from one language to the other. Several callers experienced issues with the call-in system which caused some delay and access issues during these meetings.

Next Steps

Based on the options explored and the feedback previously given by the Committee, staff recommend a combination of translated Spanish agendas, automated Spanish captioning, and in-person interpretation of meetings to adequately provide Spanish language access to City Council and Committee meetings. Providing both live interpretation and Spanish captions would meet the needs of both in-person and remote meeting attendees. Staff suggests one of the following two options for future implementation to expand language access.

Option One: Live Spanish Interpretation Upon Request / Automated Captions

With this option, all agendas would be translated into Spanish and would have a notice added stating that live in-person interpretation is available upon request with advanced notice no later than three business days (72 hours) prior to the scheduled meeting. Providing interpretation by request only is the more cost-effective option. This option would also include automated Spanish captions for online viewers for all meetings. All one-time fees for implementation could be funded through PEG account funds, while any ongoing costs would not.

Option One Service Costs	**Year 1**	**Years 2+**
Translated City Council Agendas	$10,600	$10,600
Translated Committee Agendas	$3,500	$3,500
Automated Captioning System (ACE)	$45,300*	-
Granicus Encoder	$4,500*	-
Annual Granicus Service Fee	$1,500	$1,500
Estimated Annual Live City Council Interpretation Costs (Available upon request. $1,278/six-hour meeting)	TBD**	TBD**
Estimated Annual Live Committee Interpretation Costs (Available upon request. $420/meeting)	TBD**	TBD**
TOTAL ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST	**$65,400+**	**$15,600+**

*Funded through PEG Account Funds
**Available upon request

Option Two: Live Spanish Interpretation at ALL Council & Committee Meetings / Automated Captions

This option would provide two Spanish language interpreters present at all Council and Committee meetings. Automated Spanish captions would be available for online viewers. Although this option was previously deemed cost prohibitive at prior committee meetings, this is the only option that provides both Spanish captions and Spanish audio for all meeting broadcasts. All one-time fees for implementation could be covered by PEG funds, while any ongoing costs would not.

Option Two Service Level	**Year 1**	**Years 2+**
Translated City Council Agendas	$10,600	$10,600
Translated Committee Agendas	$3,500	$3,500
Automated Captioning System (ACE)	$45,300*	-
Granicus Encoder	$4,500*	-
Annual Granicus Service Fee	$1,500	$1,500
Estimated Annual Live City Council Interpretation Costs ($200/hour at a projected rate of 48 six-hour meetings)	$61,344	$61,344
Estimated Annual Live Committee Interpretation Costs ($420/meeting at a projected rate of 84 two-hour meetings)	$35,280	$35,280
TOTAL ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST	**$162,024**	**$112,224**

*Funded through PEG Account Funds
**Estimated cost subject to RFP

Future Considerations
This report did not evaluate Spanish translation at other City meetings. There are a wide range of other meetings including, but not limited to, City Commissions, Boards, Committees, workshops, and administrative hearings. The number of meetings that are held by the City annually exceed 350. From time to time, there are requests to provide translation services at these meetings. These requests are handled by the Clerk's Office and/or the Department responsible for the event. There are also hundreds of City documents, hard copy and digital, that are not presently translated into Spanish, which is also not considered in this report.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

Implementing Spanish translation contributes to **Strategic Priority 5 – High Performing Government** and **Goal 5.2** - Utilize technology, data, and process improvement strategies to increase efficiencies, guide decision making, and ensure services are accessible and distributed equitably throughout all geographic areas of the city.

1. **Community Trust** – The ability to broadcast City Council and Committee video feeds with Spanish captions allows the City to be transparent by giving the large Spanish speaking community in Riverside the opportunity to view and participate in public meetings.

2. **Equity** – Providing Spanish translation of meetings and meeting materials ensures equity to the Riverside residents who only speak Spanish and would otherwise not be able to participate in the discussions taking place during meetings.

3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – These practices demonstrate fiscal responsibility by thoroughly exploring costs for all available options to provide Spanish translation and by exercising alternative project funding opportunities through the PEG fund.

4. **Innovation** – Exploration of technology options to ensure live broadcasting of meetings with Spanish captions throughout the City demonstrates innovative approaches to communicating with a wider audience.

5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Reaching Spanish speaking audiences through an array of translation services will help to better serve, engage, and prepare the community to be more resilient and sustainable.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to the receipt of this report; however, if one of the options are selected, then those costs associated with implementation and outlined in the report would be incurred. Hardware costs for implementation of automated Spanish captioning (estimated at $49,800) would be covered by PEG funds. Depending on the option selected, the costs not covered by PEG funding are estimated to range between $15,600 and $112,224 and would need to be allocated from the General Fund. Costs for in-person translation of all City Council and Committee meetings is currently not budgeted.

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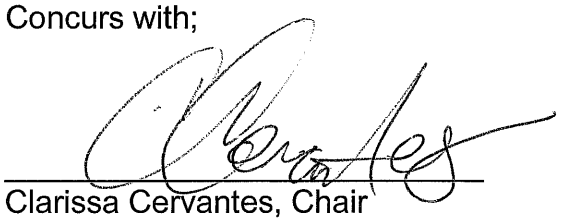
Concurs with;



Clarissa Cervantes, Chair
Inclusiveness, Community Engagement and Governmental Processes Committee

Attachment: Presentation