

**CITY OF SANTA PAULA  
MEMORANDUM**

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dan Singer, City Manager

Subject: PILOT PROGRAM FOR SPANISH LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION AT PUBLIC MEETINGS

Date: November 2, 2022

Agenda Item: 10.D

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends City Council:

1. Direct staff to move forward with a six-month pilot program for offering Spanish interpretation services at City Council Meetings;
2. Provide staff feedback as to the level of service and expectations related to Spanish interpretation services; and
3. Direct staff to return at the conclusion of the six months with an evaluation of the program.

Prepared by: Miguel Perez, City Management Fellow

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**BACKGROUND:**

At the September 21, 2022 City Council meeting, Council approved the second tranche of the City's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support several programs and projects. One of the programs Council set funds aside for is to explore a pilot program for interpretation services at public meetings, namely City Council meetings.

The City has many mono-language Spanish speaking residents in addition to data from the 2020 Census revealing that 65% of residents in Santa Paula speak a language other than English at home, with Spanish being the most preferred. As a result, staff has made a concerted effort in recent years to provide materials in English and Spanish to reach all residents in the community through our digital and print communications.

Regarding public meetings, while the City has used interpretation services in the past, and most recently for several districting workshops in the community, the City does not regularly provide interpretation services. In addition, several nonprofits in our community regularly provide interpretation services to ensure that Spanish-speaking residents are able to participate in the decision-making processes, particularly those which directly affect Spanish-speaking residents.

## **ANALYSIS:**

There are two critical factors to be considered when offering interpretation services: quality and consistency. Working with a professional language service provider is one way to ensure high quality and consistency of all translations. A professional language service provides experienced interpreters who have been trained in the field and are aware of cultural differences of the languages that they work with.

Most recently, the City utilized the services of Homeland Language Services (HLS) for a recent community Districting workshop held on September 14, 2022. HLS' current rate is \$110 per hour for one simultaneous interpreter for a less than 2-hour request (2-hour minimum). After the initial 2-hours, HLS would require us to have two simultaneous professional interpreters at a rate of \$95 per hour for each interpreter plus mileage. Round trip miles are billed based on the federal rate of \$0.625 per mile. Other professional language service providers were researched as well and are outlined below, however, HLS has been found to provide the best rates and service thus far.

Company	Cost (2 hours or less)	Cost 2-3 Hours	Cost 3-4 Hours	Headsets	Travel Fee	Up to 3 hours 12 meetings
Homeland Language Services	One Interpreter (2 hour min): \$110.00 per hour <b>\$220</b>	2 Interpreters: \$95.00 per hour * per interpreter. <b>\$570</b>	2 Interpreters: \$95.00 per hour * per interpreter. <b>\$760</b>	\$10 per unit	\$0.625 per mile	\$95.00 x (3hours) = \$285 x 2 interpreters = \$570 x12 meetings= <b>\$6,840</b>
All languages Interpreting & Translating Inc.	\$350.00 flat rate per interpreter (up to 3 hours) <b>\$700</b>	2 interpreters \$350.00 each (up to 3 hours) <b>\$700</b>	After 3 hours (\$700 +\$95 per hour,* per interpreter) <b>\$890</b>	\$6 per unit	Included	\$350.00 x 2 = \$700.00 x 12 = <b>\$8,400.00</b>
All Languages Ltd.	\$900 Half-date rate * per interpreter <b>\$1800</b>	\$900. Half-date rate * per interpreter <b>\$1800</b>	\$900. Half-date rate (up to 4 hours) <b>\$1800</b>	N/A	Charge for travel	\$900.00 x 2= \$1,800.00 x 12= <b>\$21,600</b>

In addition to the per hour cost, there is also a rental cost for the audio headsets used in the translation process per resident who takes advantage of the program. The cost per headset is \$10 dollars. The number of headsets can be adjusted up or down depending on the actual need; however, at this time, staff must notify HLS prior to each meeting how many headsets to

provide at the meeting.

With the above-mentioned costs, and recent experience with HLS, staff estimates the cost for each meeting would be approximately \$282 for a public meeting with a time of 2 hours or less with 5 headsets. There are a total of twelve regular meetings over the next six months thus putting the total cost of the pilot program at \$3,384. Additionally, it should be noted that HLS does not provide any type of long-term agreement and as a result, HLS charges per appointment requested (based on availability).

A pilot program will give staff the opportunity to evaluate the needs and interests of the community and make changes that will help to streamline the services offered should Council desire to consider this as a permanent service. Staff would also be able to monitor the demand for services at each meeting and help determine whether offering the interpretation services help to increase participation and engagement at Council meetings. This will also help staff identify any challenges and provide an assessment of the structure that will be necessary should Council desire a long-term program.

### **Other Cities Who Provide Spanish Interpretation**

To provide Council with an understanding of how other cities provide interpretation services, staff researched neighboring cities in Ventura County. The results are indicated below:

<b>City</b>	<b>Services Provided</b>
Ventura	The City has hired All Languages Interpreting & Translating Inc. (ALI&T) to provide two interpreters, who would switch off every 30 minutes, along with headsets. The total cost of the program is \$11,400 for 12 meetings.
Camarillo	Interpretation services offered for big projects that impact the whole community. Community members can request the service, but it has not been requested in several years.
Carpinteria	Maintains a contract with ALI&T for all City Council meetings, regardless of the need. The need varies based off the items being considered. The services are not utilized at all meetings.
Fillmore	By request only. Previously utilized an interpreter at every meeting but the service was not being used. Interpretation services has not been requested in the past year.
Oxnard	Maintains a contract with ALI&T for all City Council meetings, regardless of the need. The need varies based off the items being considered. The services are utilized at all meetings.
Port Hueneme	No interpretation services.
Thousand Oaks	Interpretation available upon request. 48-hours advance notice required. To date in 2022, the services have not been requested.

As is the case in other cities, it is hard to determine if interpretation services should be utilized at all Council meetings. Based on the cities above, public participation varies from meeting to meeting based upon the items being discussed. A good example of this in Santa Paula was a recently held community workshop on the Districting process, whereby staff retained HLS for services and made attendees aware of the availability of interpretation services, yet zero attendees participated.

As such, staff is requesting Council's feedback this evening as to the following questions:

1. How often, or at what public meetings, would Council desire to provide interpretation

- services (workshops, study sessions, special meetings)?; or
2. Are services only provided during meetings where high-attendance is anticipated?; or
  3. Are services provided with a 48-72 hour request in advance?; or
  4. Does the interpreter stay for the entire length of a meeting or just the first 30 minutes to determine whether interpretation services are requested or needed?; or
  5. Do we provide interpretation services only during certain portions of City Council meetings, such as consent, public hearing or action items? If so, staff will have to work with Council and the interpretation provider on logistics to make this happen during meetings.

Based on Council's feedback, staff will work with HLS who has confirmed that they could start searching for available interpreters to begin services as soon as our January 18, 2022 meeting.

Additionally, as staff looks towards updating the technology in Council Chambers, we may want to further explore streaming City Council Meetings live with Spanish interpretations on our Local Channel 10 and Granicus live stream however, those technologies still need to be researched by staff. After the conclusion of the pilot program, staff will return to Council with an evaluation and discuss next steps.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This item is not contained in Council's 2-Year Strategic Plan.

**FISCAL IMPACTS:**

For the six-month pilot program, the total cost of interpretation services at all twelve meetings will be between \$3,384 - \$7,742 depending on length of public meetings and number of interpreters required per meeting. On September 21, 2022, Council amended the City's operating and CIP budget for FY 2022/23 allocating \$10,000 dollars of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds into GL 412-5-0511-209 for a Pilot Program for Interpretation Services.

**OPTIONS:**

The Council has the following available alternative options to staff's recommendations:

1. Council could direct staff to select or further research other interpreting service options.
2. Do not move forward with implementing a pilot program for having interpreting services at city council meetings.

**ATTACHMENTS:**