



Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors

Subcommittee Report

INTERNAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

6.

Meeting Date: 09/09/2019

Subject: Policy Regarding Policy Regarding Language Interpretation Services at Board of Supervisors Meetings

Submitted For: David Twa, County Administrator

Department: County Administrator

Referral No.: IOC 19/13

Referral Name: Policy Regarding Language Interpretation Services at Board of Supervisors Meetings

Presenter: Jami Napier, Chief Asst Clerk of the Board **Contact:** Jami Napier, 925-335-1908

Referral History:

Currently, there is no formal process for providing language interpretation services at the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors meetings. If a member of the public speaks at public comment and they are more comfortable speaking a language other than English, they historically have brought a language interpreter with them for assistance. Upon approaching the podium to address the Board of Supervisors, the Clerk doubles the speaker's time in order to allow both the speaker, in their preferred language, and the English interpreter to address the Board of Supervisors. This method of interpretation is referred to as "consecutive interpretation".

In Contra Costa County, several departments utilize language translation and interpretation services from one vendor (Language Line). For example, the Employment and Human Services Department has a contract for up to \$1,250,000 to provide telephone interpretation, on-site interpretation, and document translation services. Additionally, other county departments, including the District Attorney, Health Services, and the Clerk-Recorder-Elections Department also use language interpretation services from Language Line.

To better serve the residents of Contra Costa County and encourage public participation in Board meetings, the Chair of the Board of Supervisors requested a study and report on language accommodations for Board of Supervisors meetings in the other Bay Area Counties.

Referral Update:

The Chief Assistant Clerk of the Board conducted a survey of Bay Area counties and received responses from four local counties: Alameda, Marin, Santa Clara, and Solano. The four responding counties request a 72-hour advance notice for language interpretation services from individuals planning to attend a Board of Supervisors meeting. All four counties currently provide language accommodations in varying degrees, as summarized below.

Contracts with Neighboring Counties: Overview and Administration

- **Alameda County** Clerk of the Board, through administration, has contracts with two vendors and provides services in both American Sign Language and Spanish upon a 72-hour advance request.
- **Marin County** Clerk of the Board has one contract through their administration office and can provide translation services in both Spanish and other languages, also with a 72-hour advance request.
- **Santa Clara County** Clerk of the Board through their executive office has multiples contracts with translation vendors. The Clerk of the Board uses Mandarin, Spanish and other language translators.
- **Solano County** Clerk of the Board reports that they do not have a contract to provide language translation services, but citizens can request a Spanish translator with a 72-hour advance request.

Vendor Services and Pricing

The costs for services will vary with the breadth of the contract. Costs tend to be on an hourly or as-needed basis. Among the counties surveyed, there is a consensus that in person interpretation services have a two-hour minimum time length. All counties evaluated, with the exception of Santa Clara, have limited experience with translation services. The costs provided below are based on information provided by customers of other existing service contracts, rather than by the vendors. The costs are provided only for benchmarking and discussion purposes, and do not constitute a bid or proposal from the vendors discussed below.

In-Person and On-Site Interpretation

Language Line, the vendor Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services uses for interpretation services has a 2-hour minimum for on-site services.

Language Line On-Site Service Prices	
Tier 1 – Spanish	\$60/hour
Tier 2 – Standard Languages	\$60/hour
Tier 3 – American Sign Language	\$70/hour
Tier 4 – Rare Languages	\$80/hour

A few examples of standard languages are Cantonese, Mandarin and Tagalog. Rare languages include Burmese, Mongolian and Tongan.

Linguistica, the vendor that Marin County Clerk of the Board uses for interpretation services also has a 2-hour minimum for on-site interpretations/in-person services.

Linguistica On-Site Service Prices	
Spanish	\$65/hour
All other languages	\$75/hour

Telephone Interpretation

Voiance is utilized by Santa Clara County to provide over-the-phone interpretation. Voiance contractors charge a rate of \$0.59 per minute and list over 60 languages in the contract.

<u>Voiance Telephone Service Prices</u>	
60 languages	\$0.59/minute (equivalent to \$35.40/hour)

Written Materials Translation

Language Line, the vendor the Contra Costa Employment and Human Services uses has written materials translation fees in their contract. With a \$60 minimum, the charges are per word.

<u>Language Line Written Materials Prices</u>	
Spanish	\$.19/word
Cantonese & Mandarin	\$.24/word
Tagalog	\$.25/word

As an example, a Board of Supervisors meeting agenda is on average 26 pages. There are approximately 300 words per page for an agenda. The cost for a Spanish translation of a 7,800 words is \$1,482.00

A discussion item board report can be from one to one-hundred pages long with 400-500 words on a page. A ten-page board report with 400 words on a page would cost \$960.00 to translate.

Recommendation(s)/Next Step(s):

1. ACCEPT report regarding the use of translation and interpretation services by other counties;
2. DETERMINE whether or not the County should adopt a policy related to interpretation and/or translation services;
3. DIRECT staff to draft a policy on language interpretation services for Board of Supervisors meetings, if the Internal Operations Committee determines that a policy is needed.

Fiscal Impact (if any):

Unknown fiscal impact.

Attachments

No file(s) attached.
