



Contra
Costa
County

To: Board of Supervisors
From: Monica Nino, County Administrator
Date: August 2, 2022

Subject: Language Interpretation Services at Board of Supervisors and Measure X Meetings

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. RECEIVE report on language interpretation services and FY21-22 related expenditures.
2. DETERMINE if any changes should be made to the current practice of the Board of Supervisors or the Measure X Community Advisory Board at their meetings with the interpretation services provided.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This is an informational report only.

This report includes the FY 2021/22 total costs of \$80,370, related to interpreter services for the Board of Supervisors and Measure X meetings.

BACKGROUND:

History of Interpretation Services

On March 26, 2019, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) requested that the Internal Operations Committee (IOC) develop a policy on language interpretation services at Board of Supervisors meetings. The IOC considered this matter on September 9, 2019 and decided

☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY
ADMINISTRATOR

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD
COMMITTEE

Action of Board On: **08/02/2022** ☐ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☐ OTHER

Clerks Notes:

VOTE OF SUPERVISORS

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: August 2, 2022

Contact: Jami Morritt
925-655-2005

Monica Nino, County Administrator and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: , Deputy

cc:

that the services could not practically be rolled out until staff relocated to the new Administration Building at 1025 Escobar Street in Martinez.

On January 21, 2020, staff presented, at IOC direction, a report to the Board of Supervisors with options for implementing language translation services at BOS meetings upon 72 hours' prior notice once the Board began using its new meeting chambers, estimated to be in June 2020. The Board's direction in January was for the Clerk of the Board Division to secure its own contract for hiring interpreters, which would enable BOS meetings to feature additional requested services for the public. This roll-out would include adding a language interpretation policy to the County website and working with the Office of Communications and Media on how to communicate the new policy and procedures to the public.

Efforts to plan and implement language interpretation and translation were stymied by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, the Board had still been meeting at 651 Pine Street. State and County health orders necessitated converting Board of Supervisors meetings to a virtual model.

BACKGROUND: (CONT'D)

Ensuring effective virtual meetings with public participation was the focus for both Clerk of the Board and DoIT (Department of Information Technology) for the second and third quarters of 2020. These divisions worked collaboratively to convert meetings to an entirely new format, while preserving the ability of the public to participate. As the logistics for managing the BOS meetings were refined, the use of interpretation services for public comment was quickly added. A board room interpreter was introduced at the September 8, 2020 Board of Supervisors meeting. The current process for interpretation services is to have an interpreter in the Board Chambers who provides consecutive interpretation for Spanish-speakers during public comment periods of the meetings. The County currently contracts with Continental Interpreting for interpretation services.

Based on direction from the February 2021 Internal Operations Committee meeting, the Clerk of the Board completed the following:

- Added language to the Board of Supervisors agenda template regarding the availability of Spanish interpretation and closed-captioning;
- Worked with the Office of Communications and Media on a news release for the Supervisors to share with constituents about the availability of Spanish interpretation and closed-captioning;
- Worked with the current vendor, Continental Interpreting, to create a list of other potential languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Farsi. The average cost per interpreter is \$1,100 per full day (up to 4 hours) and \$1,800 per extended full day (up to 9 hours). Two to three business days is required, with one week being the ideal amount of notice, to request either an on-site or remote interpreter;
- Researched costs to translate board materials to other languages. Costs start at 16 cents per word for Spanish translation and 24 cents per word for most European, Middle Eastern and Asian Languages. An average 22 page/ 8,092 word agenda would cost \$1,294.72 to translate into Spanish. A vendor needs approximately a 72-hour notice to translate an agenda, which would also entail editing to the timeline for publication. The entire agenda process would increase by the 72 hours plus editing time in order to have the Spanish version of the agenda ready for publishing 96 hours before the meeting.

Counties comparison The Clerk of the Board surveyed the California Clerk of the Boards in June 2022 and received feedback from three of the four counties surveyed in 2019 plus five other counties that currently provide some level of interpretation services:

- **Alameda County** - Clerk of the Board has contracts with two vendors and provides services in both American Sign Language and Spanish upon a 72-hour advance request;
- **Santa Clara** - has two language interpreters who provide Spanish and Vietnamese services at each Board of Supervisors meeting and the interpreters attend the meetings from before roll call through adjournment. Agenda information is translated upon request only, yet there have been very few requests for this service;
- **Marin County** – Uses a real-time Spanish language interpreter on a concurrent Zoom feed;
- **Los Angeles County** has a Spanish interpreter available by phone for each meeting regardless of if it has been requested;
- **San Bernadino County** has a Spanish interpreter at each board meeting regardless of if it has been requested by a member of the public;
- **San Diego County** has a Spanish interpreter at each Board meeting, regardless of if it has been requested. Additional languages identified as having a Substantial Number of Limited English-Speaking Persons in the County, including Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Korean, Persian (Farsi, Dari), Somali, Tagalog, and Vietnamese may be made available upon request to the Clerk of the

Board at least 72 hours prior to the meeting;

- **Sonoma County** provides simultaneous Spanish interpretation in Zoom for every meeting. They have a note to ask for additional language accommodation with the Clerk's Office as needed; and
- **Kern County** offers simultaneous Spanish interpretation for the TRUTH Act Forum and at Budget Hearing meetings.

Current Practices at Board of Supervisors and Measure X Community Advisory Board Meetings

The Board currently offers closed-captioning and Spanish language interpretation at all Board meetings. No advance notice is required by the public since the interpreter is present during the entirety of the Board of Supervisors meeting. In addition, the Measure X Community Advisory Board meetings also offer closed-captioning, American Sign Language, and simultaneous Spanish interpretation at its meetings.

Fiscal Year 2021/22 Costs Associated with Interpretation Services & Usage of Services

| Interpretation Services Procured FY 2021-22 | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| | Spanish | ASL | Total Costs | Number of Meetings |
| Board of Supervisors | \$42,300 | n/a | \$42,300 | 32 |
| Measure X Community Advisory Board | \$12,720 | \$32,250 | \$35,970 | 20 |
| Truth Forum | \$2,100 | n/a | \$2,100 | 1 |
| | \$57,120 | \$23,250 | \$80,370 | 53 |

For FY 2021/22, the County has used an interpreter at all the Board of Supervisors, Fire Protection District, and the Housing Authority meetings. The County also used simultaneous interpretation for the annual Truth Act forum and for 20 Measure X meetings.

Interpretation costs associated with these meetings are as follows:

- Board of Supervisors meetings = \$42,300 (\$2,820 per comment interpreted)
- Truth Act forum = \$2,100
- Measure X meetings = \$35,970 (\$4,496 per comment interpreted)

Approximately 15 public comments were interpreted at the Board of Supervisors meetings during FY 2021/22. The interpreter announces in Spanish the option for the public to comment to the Board of Supervisors on average of ten times per meeting: for consent items, for each of the discussion items, and the opportunity to speak under general public comment. For the Measure X Community Advisory Board, comments were made in Spanish and American Sign Language at eight of the 20 meetings during the fiscal year.

Conclusion

Contra Costa County has made significant efforts to increase accessibility and engagement for its constituency. Compared to other counties, Contra Costa County is one of the few California Counties to have a full-time board room interpreter at all its Board of Supervisor, Fire Protection District and Housing Authority meetings. For FY 2021-22, interpretation services were provided in Spanish and American Sign Language at 53 public meetings, for a total cost of \$80,370, and public comments in either language totaled 23. To balance public access with cost and demand for services, County administration seeks direction on

the policies for language interpretation services moving forward. Two major options are provided for consideration.

1. Maintain existing practices – Provide a Spanish interpreter at each Board of Supervisors and Truth Act Forum meeting, and simultaneous Spanish interpretation and American Sign Language at each Measure X meeting.
2. Shift to providing American Sign Language and Spanish interpreter services upon a 72-hour advance request for Measure X meetings and a 72-hour advance request for Spanish interpreter services at the Board of Supervisors meetings. Simultaneous Spanish interpretation will continue to be standard at the annual Truth Act Forum.

CLERK'S ADDENDUM

Speakers: Caller 6770; Gigi Crowder, Executive Director NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness); Elizabeth Ortega; Dr. Kirby Lynch; Amber; Erica Yanez; Chelsea; Phillip; Debbie Toth.

RECEIVED the report; ACKNOWLEDGED that the contract for the fiscal year 2022--2023 is already approved; REFERRED the matter to the Internal Operations Committee to gather additional information on the practices of other counties and issues surrounding equal access; STATED an interest in simultaneous broadcast in Spanish.