



AGENDA REPORT

City Council

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| DATE: | December 17, 2024 |
| TO: | Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council |
| FROM: | Councilmember Doria Robinson Vice Mayor Claudia Jimenez (co-sponsor) Councilmember Gayle McLaughlin (co-sponsor) |
| Subject: | Create a plan to offer simultaneous Spanish-English translation during all Richmond City Council Meetings starting in FY 25-26 |
| FINANCIAL IMPACT: | The full cost of this initiative is currently unknown but should become known as a part of the project development. |
| PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION: | None |
| STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE: | <p>As demographics in Richmond continue to change it is important that we take steps to make sure that important city governance meetings such as City Council meetings are linguistically accessible.</p> <p>The intent is to begin by offering simultaneous translation for the second largest linguistic group, Spanish speakers both for those who would like to listen to Council meetings in person and or would like to speak in person at council meetings, as well as offering a similar simultaneous translation service via zoom.</p> <p>Although the first area of focus for this plan and its implementation will be for Spanish speakers this plan should also set up a clear process for people who speak other languages used in Richmond such as Laotian,</p> |

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| | Arabic, Mandarin, or Hindi to name just a few, to request translations services in advance of a meeting that they would like to participate in. |
| RECOMMENDED ACTION: | DIRECT city staff to 1) research solutions other jurisdictions are using to offer simultaneous translation services during Council meetings, 2) create a plan to offer, at minimum, simultaneous Spanish-English translation in person, and on zoom at every council meeting, 3) set up a clear system for those who speak languages other than Spanish and want to participate in a City council meeting to request FREE translation support in advance of a City Council meeting. Translation service requests should offer an online, telephone and in person option through the clerk's office, 4) to make available by request translation of meeting agendas, within a reasonable time frame, into languages other than English, 5) to, at minimum, make sure that starting 1/1/26 Spanish subtitles are available for all KCRT City Council meeting recordings, 6) to research, draft and include in the FY 25 -26 budget the funding necessary to support this plan, and 7) to complete the execution of this plan by December 31, 2025 so that new language access services could start as soon as, or sooner than, January 1, 2026 - Vice Mayor Claudia Jimenez (510-620-6565), Councilmembers Doria Robinson (510-620-6568) and Gayle McLaughlin (510-620-6636). |

DISCUSSION:

This item seeks to develop an actionable plan to begin offering in-person and online simultaneous translation so all Richmond residents can directly access and fully participate in City Council meetings.

As demographics in Richmond continue to change it is important that we take steps to make sure that important city governance meetings such as City Council meetings are linguistically accessible.

Currently, over 44% of the population identify as Hispanic. According to the US Census Bureau, 38.3% of the population of Richmond, California speak Spanish at home and more and more residents are monolingual Spanish speakers. It is important to make sure that these residents can fully participate in the civic life, discussions and decision making that affect their families, homes and neighborhoods.

A strong and united Richmond focused on working together to bring forward and solve the issues that face our community needs the full participation of all Richmond residents, not only those who are fluent English speakers.

The intent is to begin by offering simultaneous translation for the second largest linguistic group, Spanish speakers both for those who would like to listen to Council meetings in person and or would like to speak in person at council meetings, as well as offering a similar simultaneous translation service via zoom.

With the prevalence of low-cost transmission devices and certified translators and zoom based translations services it is now possible to offer simultaneous in-person and online translation for residents.

So that all Richmond residents can directly access and fully participate in City Council meetings, this item seeks to develop an actionable plan to begin offering in-person and online simultaneous translation with the following steps:

1. Research solutions other jurisdictions are using to offer simultaneous translation services during Council meetings.
2. Create a plan to offer, at minimum, simultaneous Spanish-English translation in person, and on zoom at every council meeting.
3. Set up a clear system for those who speak languages other than Spanish and want to participate in a City council meeting to request FREE translation support in advance of a City Council meeting. Translation service requests should offer an online, telephone and in person option through the clerk's office.
4. To make available by request translation of meeting agendas, within a reasonable time frame, into languages other than English.
5. To, at minimum, make sure that starting 1/1/26 Spanish subtitles are available for all KCRT City Council meeting recordings.
6. To research, draft and include in the FY 25 -26 budget the funding necessary to support this plan.
7. To complete the execution of this plan by December 31, 2025 so that new language access services could start as soon as, or sooner than, January 1, 2026.

Without translation services offered by professional, certified translators, monolingual Spanish speaking Richmond residents are either left out of the public discourse, or are forced to unfairly rely on friends, family or their minor children to help them express themselves on important civic issues. And it is often unknown if the translation is accurate.

Although the first area of focus for this plan and its implementation will be for Spanish speakers this plan should also set up a clear process for people who speak other languages used in Richmond such as Laotian, Arabic, Mandarin, or Hindi to name just a few, to request translations services in advance of a meeting that they would like to participate in.

We are also requesting staff investigate new AI simultaneous translations services to see if such services could be a cost-effective way to increase language access to City Council meetings.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

None