

09-18-2019 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #2: Receive Update on Building Integrated Communities Initiative and Provide Input on Draft Language Access Plan

Council Question:

There appears to be some discrepancy between the most common languages spoken and referenced on p. 53 and the Town's primary languages on p. 56 of the agenda packet. How were the Town's primary languages determined?

Staff Response:

Town staff identified the Town's primary languages (found on page 73 of meeting packet) based on multiple data sources. To inform their decision, staff reviewed the U.S Census American Community Survey data (shown on page 53 and page 69), refugee arrival data (page 70), Town service data, and information gathered through Building Integrated Communities community engagement (page 71). We recommend Spanish and Mandarin Chinese, as these are our largest non-English language groups. The Town has frequent contact with these language groups and our community partners identified these as key languages. We propose prioritizing Burmese and Karen languages based on refugee arrival data, Town service data, and community partner input. While Korean is the third largest non-English language group by the American Community Survey data, we do not propose including this as a primary language for translation and interpretation, as the Town seldom has received requests for language services for this language and community partners who work with immigrant and refugee residents do not identify this as a high need language group.

Council Question:

What would be the process for securing interpretation and translation services for a given meeting?

Staff Response:

When Town staff are made aware that interpretation or translation services are needed, we would secure interpreters or translators through a local language service provider or trained Town staff. Additional details on this procedure can be found on page 76 of the meeting packet.

Council Question:

How far in advance would interpretation and translation service requests need to be made?

Staff Response:

On page 74 of the packet, the proposed policy states that we request notice 48 hours in advance to ensure adequate time to make arrangements for interpretation or translation services.

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Council Question:

How would competent, trained and culturally sensitive interpreters and translators be secured?

Staff Response:

The proposed Language Access Plan (LAP) policies and procedures outline that the Town would use professional interpreters and translators from established language service providers or internal staff who have been trained and assessed (see page 74 and 76 of the packet).

Professional interpreters and translators abide by a code of ethics and professional practice standards.

Council Question:

In the absence of translated documents, how can people who speak languages other than the Town's primary languages, have accessible documents?

Staff Response:

We propose evaluating such requests on a case by case basis taking into account the nature of the document being requested and the cost associated with translation. We would make our best effort to translate such documents or offer an interpreter to provide in person interpretation of the document.

Council Question:

What kind of technologies would accompany these interpretation and translation services?

Staff Response:

The Office for Housing and Community recently purchased interpretation equipment for Town and community use. This equipment allows for simultaneous interpretation at meetings.

Additionally, we are exploring the applicability of other technology tools, such as translation software programs, Google Translate, and other tools that the Town may use to advance the Language Access Plan.

Council Question:

Has staff been identified that can assist with interpretation/translation of each of the Town's primary languages?

Staff Response:

From a recent survey we conducted of Town departments, we have information about the languages spoken by Town staff. We have not yet determined which of those staff who are bilingual might have an interest in serving as interpreters and translators. We would pursue this

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information if the Council approves a Language Access Plan. The Plan proposes supporting the training of bilingual staff as interpreters and translators (page 75) who would be able to use their skills to assist with interpretation and translation.