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January 19, 2018

Honorable David E. Ryu, Chair  
Health, Education, and Neighborhood Council Committee  
Councilmember, Fourth District  
Los Angeles City Hall  
200 N Spring Street, Room 425  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUBJECT: REPORT BACK ON COUNCIL FILE 17-0600-S41 REGARDING TRANSLATION  
EXPENSES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS

Honorable Committee Chair Ryu:

### Background

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (Department) requests in our budget proposal each year that all unspent Neighborhood Council funds be set aside in a special fund for Neighborhood Councils to use for translation and capacity building services. Neighborhood Councils currently schedule directly with the vendors and pay for translation and interpretation services from their own yearly allocations.

The Department noted the inequity in the annual funding allocation for Neighborhood Councils because some Neighborhood Councils have a large portion of their funding go to translation while others do not provide translation at all even if it is needed because of the cost. By setting aside a special fund using the unspent Neighborhood Council funds each year, which typically ranges from \$400,000 to \$600,000, Neighborhood Councils could request funding for translation and capacity building services from the special fund and still use their yearly allocation for other community projects.

During last year's budget hearings, Councilmember Bob Blumenfield requested a report back on how much it would cost to provide enough translation funding for the Neighborhood Council system and whether this cost could come from the Neighborhood Empowerment Fund.

## Neighborhood Council Translation Needs

Translation is crucial to expanding the number of stakeholders engaged in the Neighborhood Council system. There are over 200 languages spoken in communities across Los Angeles, and many stakeholders speak a second or third language. With the diversity in the Neighborhood Council system, it is likely that almost every Neighborhood Council should be providing some translation and interpretation to connect with their various stakeholders even if they have not received a request. Yet, only thirteen Neighborhood Councils have provided translation and/or interpretation at their respective meetings during FY 17-18. Spanish, Korean, and Chinese are the three languages that are most commonly requested for translation at Neighborhood Council meetings. It is likely that other Neighborhood Councils do not provide translation or interpretation because of the cost, which has increased each year. The total cost of translation or interpretation for the Neighborhood Councils for the past few fiscal years are:

- FY 2017-18 thus far: \$17,706.20 (anticipating costs of approximately \$50,000)
- FY 2016-17: \$46,876.13
- FY 2015-16: \$30,855.47
- FY 2014-15: \$23,056.48

The Department spends approximately \$25,000 each year to provide translation and interpretation for community meetings, trainings, outreach materials, and town halls. In addition, the Department also translates the Neighborhood Council monthly profile into Spanish, Korean and Chinese. Translating the Neighborhood Council monthly profile costs approximately \$872 per month for an annual cost of approximately \$10,464. The monthly profiles are usually approximately 10-11 pages.

The cost for translation is approximately \$80 per page depending on the language. Interpretation costs are approximately \$60-\$100 per hour depending on language, length of meeting, and when the request was made. Between translation of documents and interpretation, a typical Neighborhood Council board meeting would cost between \$350 - \$500 for these services.

If each of the currently 97 Neighborhood Councils conducted outreach in at least one language to an underrepresented monolingual population in their area, and these stakeholders attended their monthly board meetings, costs would range from \$33,950 to \$48,500 each month, which is \$407,400 to \$582,000 annually. Because not all of the Neighborhood Councils will need translation and interpretation every time and because some Neighborhood Councils will need more than others, we anticipate the estimated annual translation and interpretation costs to be in the right range. This amount can be covered by the annual unused Neighborhood Council funds each year, and the Department can administer the funds.

I am available to answer any other questions you may have on this matter.

Sincerely,



Grayce Liu  
General Manager