



COSD CLERK OF THE BOARD
2022 MAY 2 AM 10:37

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: May 10, 2022

08

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

PROMOTING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY: IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION, LANGUAGE SERVICES, REMOTE TECHNOLOGY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On December 7, 2021 (12), the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved recommendations from the Transparency Committee to investigate actions that could be taken to increase transparency and ease of access to County information in five subject areas and to bring back specific proposals to update policies, practices, and procedures for subsequent Board consideration. Following Board direction, the Transparency Committee and County staff worked together to identify actions to increase transparency and accessibility throughout the County enterprise.

The proposed changes to the County's policies and practices developed as part of this process include five actions that can currently be taken by County staff and five additional actions requiring Board direction. The initiatives being taken by County staff include the creation of a centralized Public Records Act system and dedicated support team, establishment of a two-year County email auto-delete policy, development of an enhanced archived public records system, improvement to County interpretation and translation services, training and support, and dedication of County resources to enhance community engagement. We are also recommending additional Board direction to enhance the public's ability to access County public meetings which will include an analysis of all public meetings and resources and processes necessary to stream/record/post meeting proceedings online at a centralized location. Finally, we are recommending that staff conduct an assessment of community engagement within County programs and identify opportunities for improved collaboration with the public. These proposed changes reflect the County's commitment to ensuring public trust and fostering a system of transparency, openness, public participation, and collaboration. With these transparency recommendations complete, we propose to sunset the Transparency Committee.

SUBJECT: PROMOTING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY: IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION, LANGUAGE SERVICES, REMOTE TECHNOLOGY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (DISTRICTS: ALL)

RECOMMENDATION(S)

VICE CHAIR NORA VARGAS AND SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON

Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

1. Ensure all public meetings currently being recorded are posted to appropriate County websites for ease of access and multimedia publication and report back to the Board within nine months.
2. Conduct a comprehensive analysis of all County public meetings and the resources and processes necessary to stream/record/post meeting proceedings online at a centralized location and report back to the Board within nine months.
3. Identify the methods and processes needed to promote the community's ability to view public meetings online and to enhance meeting participation, including feedback from impacted and underrepresented communities and report back to the Board within nine months.
4. Develop and conduct an assessment of community engagement within County programs and report back to the Board within nine months on the number of stakeholders, programs engaged, and opportunities for improved collaboration.
5. With the tasks completed, the Ad Hoc Transparency Committee is dissolved.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

All communities are entitled to a transparent and accountable government. To ensure County decisions and policies are based on community engagement and broad public input, it is vital that all communities, including those who have been historically underserved, have the ability to easily access accurate information and to provide their input to the County. Facilitating access to County information and removing barriers, such as language barriers, will foster a transparent and accountable government that works for all, including communities historically lacking in access to government.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's recommended actions though they may result in future fiscal impacts. Staff will return to the Board for consideration and approval of any such impacts.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

SUBJECT: PROMOTING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY: IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION, LANGUAGE SERVICES, REMOTE TECHNOLOGY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (DISTRICTS: ALL)

BACKGROUND

On January 12, 2021 (9), the Board of Supervisors created the Transparency Committee to collaborate with County staff, hold meetings, conduct research on best practices, engage the public, and craft recommendations that would allow for greater transparency, accessibility, and open government within the County of San Diego. After engaging community members on the subject of transparency and accessibility, the Transparency Committee, comprised of Vice Chair Nora Vargas and Supervisor Joel Anderson, asked County staff to focus their research and recommendations on the following topics: Public Records Act requests, email retention policy, accessibility of archived public records, interpretation and translation services, and stakeholder engagement. Based on the collaborative work done with the Transparency Committee, which has completed its work as a committee, County staff recommended changes to policies and practices related to these subject areas; some recommendations fall within the purview of the Chief Administrative Officer and are being implemented by County staff, while other recommendations require Board direction.

Public Records Act

The County has a de-centralized approach wherein each department is responsible for their own Public Records Act (PRA) responses. Current practices are legally compliant, however there is no centralized public facing webpage or single point of contact for PRA requests. To increase accessibility and transparency to the public, County staff has recommended that the County adopt a model that includes a centralized software system with an external webpage for the public to submit PRA requests managed by a centralized team to review and coordinate responses. There is no need for Board action. The Chief Administrative Officer is working to procure a centralized PRA software system and establish a support team. Funding and staffing resources are included in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 CAO Recommended Operational Plan.

Email Retention

The current County policy provides for the automatic deletion of emails that do not qualify as official records after 60 days.¹ Although the 60-day time period has been efficient for storage capacity, it limits information available to the public when they seek information through PRA requests. Based on an analysis of best practices used by mid-sized companies and government agencies, the County's email auto-delete policy will be updated to extend the auto-delete email policy from 60-days to two years.

¹ Official records, including emails that qualify as official records, must be kept for a minimum of two years though the retention period can be longer depending on the retention schedule set by a given department. See CAO Admin Manual 0040-11.

SUBJECT: PROMOTING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY: IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION, LANGUAGE SERVICES, REMOTE TECHNOLOGY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (DISTRICTS: ALL)

Archived Public Records

The County's official records of Board actions are maintained by the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in an online database. These records date back to 1877 and the database allows for full text searches of Board Agendas, Minute Orders, Statements of Proceedings/Minutes, Board Letters (and supporting documents), and archived microfilm. There have been some functionality issues as well as problems with search performance and database stability. County staff will implement improvements and upgrades that will provide the public with more accurate full-text searchable results in a more expeditious manner.

Interpretation and Translation Services

Ensuring that government works for everyone, regardless of the language they speak, requires a comprehensive interpretation and translation program. The County has made language access a key goal under the new County Strategic Plan and invested funding and resources to enhance language services. In addition to offering interpretation and written translation services in Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese ("threshold languages"), the County has contracted with 12 vendors that can offer services in up to 200 languages. These services are available for all vital documents and on an as-needed basis throughout all aspects of County work, including offices, clinics, clients' homes, schools, libraries, and public forums. In addition to these professional interpretation and translation services, many bilingual staff also provide interpretation and translation assistance to their coworkers and clients. As part of the County language access work, staff will continue to explore methods to expand the availability of resources, including bilingual stipends when applicable for these employees.

The County is in the process of developing a robust training program to ensure all staff are fully informed about the broad array of interpretation and translation services and how to access the services on demand. In addition to training staff to affirmatively offer the services to clients, the County will create documents and signs to inform the public that all County services can be provided in a wide variety of languages. Additionally, to coordinate the language services offered, the County is creating a new translation coordinator position.

In coordination with the Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics, the Chief Administrative Officer will track the impact, reach, and quality of translation and interpretation efforts. Based on this data, staff will identify where further attention and development is needed to ensure equitable language access. Additionally, the Board will track the data regarding the status and quality of translation and interpretation services via the Annual Report, which will also identify opportunities for development of the language access program.

Stakeholder Engagement

The County has made a commitment to center community engagement in all aspects of County business. The County's Reimagined General Management System, a guiding document for all

SUBJECT: PROMOTING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY: IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION, LANGUAGE SERVICES, REMOTE TECHNOLOGY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (DISTRICTS: ALL)

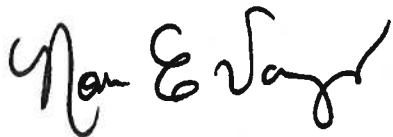
County business, places a significant emphasis on community engagement. During the pandemic, County boards and commissions experienced increased public participation and interest due to the ease of access through remote participation. The momentum of increased community engagement can be fostered through use of these technology tools and others. To continue to grow interest in the County's deliberations and decision-making, the County should conduct an analysis of all County public meetings to determine the resources necessary to stream online and post recordings of public meetings. As part of this analysis, the County should identify how best to promote the public's ability to view such online offerings and should specifically seek feedback from impacted and underrepresented communities.

To increase stakeholder engagement, a cross-departmental community engagement team is working with the community to assess best practices and develop a strategy to embed comprehensive community engagement within the fabric of the County. Additionally, this assessment should also focus on the symbiotic relationship with County community partners as the County has the capacity to underwrite many community partner activities, and in many cases, such community partners can accomplish things quicker and with greater efficiency than the County. As team members, the County and its stakeholders need to use this synergy to work together and hold each other accountable for the good and positive work they do. To maximize stakeholder engagement opportunities, we recommend the Board provide direction to the Chief Administrative Officer to assess resources and processes necessary to ensure that all County public meetings are recorded and accessible online through a centralized location, to assess stakeholder and program engagement, and report back to the Board with opportunities for improved collaboration.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

The requested action supports the County's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan initiatives of Transparency and Accountability, Engagement, Communications, and Partnership by encouraging residents to engage with the County in discussions, deliberations, and decision making.

Respectfully submitted,



NORA VARGAS
Supervisor, First District



JOEL ANDERSON
Supervisor, Second District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A

Legistar v1.0