

MINUTES OF THE ADJOURNED JOINT MEETING OF THE MONTCLAIR CITY COUNCIL AND REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY BOARD HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 7, 2002, AT 5:45 P.M. IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 5111 BENITO STREET, MONTCLAIR, CALIFORNIA

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor/Chairman Eaton called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor/Chairman Eaton; Mayor Pro Tem/Vice Chairman Paulitz; Council Member/Director Ruh; City Manager/Executive Director McDougal; Director of Administrative Services Starr; Director of Redevelopment/Public Works Staats; Director of Community Development/Agency Planner Clark; City/Agency Engineer Hudson; City Clerk/Agency Secretary Crawford

Absent: Council Member/Director Dutrey (arrived 5:46 p.m.); Council Member/Director Raft

III. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

IV. COUNCIL/AGENCY WORKSHOP

A. Presentation on Improving Communication With Residents and Business Owners

Assistant Director of Human Services Yoakum stated that tonight's presentation is in response to City Manager McDougal's Goal No. 14. She reviewed a language survey that was conducted of all City departments, which determined that Spanish is the language spoken and translated by all bilingual pay staff, bilingual employees are available to translate the majority of the time and are called upon often, and with few exceptions no serious problems have been experienced because of the lack of a translator. She stated there is an indication that more public improvement project notification material should be translated into Spanish for the benefit of those residents. She stated that generally most City departments are effectively able to communicate with the public and are meeting the communication needs of the community.

Mayor/Chairman Eaton asked if any problems are encountered by safety personnel responding to incidents after hours.

Assistant Director of Human Services Yoakum replied that according to survey respondent Police Lieutenant Chris Weiske, it is sometimes frustrating waiting for a translator to respond to an incident during evening hours or weekends.

Council Member/Director Dutrey stated he has observed during Police ride-alongs that some officers know a few Spanish words and are somewhat effective in communicating with Spanish-speaking persons. He asked why the seven full-time bilingual employees listed in the survey do not participate in the bilingual pay program.

Assistant Director of Human Services Yoakum responded that labor agreements allow only a certain number of program participants per department. She added that those employees would need to be certified through the Claremont Language Academy examination process prior to being considered for the program.

Council Member/Director Dutrey suggested staff explore the possibility of increasing the allowable number of employees in the program to provide for better public service. He inquired if the recording on the City's main telephone line had offered a Spanish-language translation at one time.

Director of Administrative Services Starr replied the message was never offered in Spanish, noting the limited amount of time allocated for the message does not allow for a Spanish translation. He stated the telephone system could be expanded to include mailboxes for different programs and a Spanish translation could then be added.

Council Member/Director Dutrey suggested staff explore expansion of the telephone service to include a Spanish translation.

Director of Administrative Services Starr indicated a short-term solution would be to amend the message to indicate a Spanish translation to follow and then have the receptionist assist such callers.

Council Member/Director Dutrey indicated that would be fine.

Mayor Pro Tem/Vice Chairman Paulitz commented on the irony of English being recognized as a universal language across Europe, noting international pilots must know English to be able to fly to global airports. He noted the importance of providing bilingual services in this region while cautioning that perhaps conceptually the City would become an "enabler" in far exceeding such language assistance. He described the "melting pot" concept of his German ancestors who came to America and immediately desired to become Americans and to speak and understand the language in order to succeed. He noted the importance of newcomers learning the prevailing language of the culture.

Council Member/Director Ruh concurred with the "enabling" concept. He noted learning last year from the **Ontario-Montclair School District** that the vast majority of students enrolled in English-language courses experience difficulties with learning the language because they converse at home with families that speak no English. He expressed his hope of the establishment in the future of a newcomers' school for families to learn English together. He emphasized the importance of offering bilingual services, particularly in the realm of public safety. He suggested offering employees an educational benefit to learn functional/conversational Spanish.

Assistant Director of Human Services Yoakum noted the progress being made in the *Por La Vida* program to foster self-esteem in participants.

Council Member/Director Ruh commented on the obstacles encountered by many who rely solely on public transportation.

Mayor Pro Tem/Vice Chairman Paulitz noted that at the turn of the 20th century, high schools had offered immigration classes for participants to become American citizens.

Council Member/Director Dutrey expressed his understanding of the struggle to learn another language as English is his second language. He concurred it is important for our society to have a common language. He asked for Council concurrence on the following items:

1. Inclusion of a Spanish translation on the main Civic Center telephone line.
2. Renegotiation of labor agreements to expand the bilingual pay program.
3. Inclusion in all public-notification materials of a Spanish translation.
4. Exploration of offering employees an educational benefit incentive to learn functional/conversational Spanish.

City Manager McDougal noted the above item is already in place.

Director of Administrative Services Starr clarified that management employees are not eligible to receive bilingual pay. He added that more and more in the hiring process, departments often prefer Spanish-speaking applicants for certain positions.

City Manager McDougal stated that one option would be to include managers in the bilingual pay program, which would immediately increase the numbers of Spanish speaking employees.

Council Member/Director Dutrey stated that would be fine.

It was the consensus of the Council to direct staff to take action on the first three previously outlined recommendations and to add inclusion of managers in the bilingual pay program.

Mayor/Chairman Eaton thanked Assistant Director of Human Services Yoakum for her presentation. He stated, "I think we're doing a good job. I appreciate it."

V. ADJOURNMENT

At 6:18 p.m., Mayor/Chairman Eaton adjourned the City Council and Redevelopment Agency Board of Directors.

Submitted for City Council/Redevelopment Agency Board approval,

Yvonne L. Smith
Transcribing Secretary