



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: May 23, 2013
To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
From: Nancy Hunt-Coffey, Assistant Director of Community Services
Subject: Update for the City Council on the provision of an English as a Second Language program through the Recreation division of the Community Services Department

Attachments: 1. None

INTRODUCTION

As was discussed at the May 7, 2013 City Council meeting, the Beverly Hills Unified School District has decided to eliminate the remaining Adult School courses due to reduced and redirected funding. The remaining courses are English as a Second Language (ESL), and they will cease as of the end of the fiscal year. As a result, the City Council is interested in offering ESL and citizenship courses through the Recreation division. Staff has done further research and analysis and recommends that the City offer 6 new courses taught by contractual staff.

DISCUSSION

As was directed at the May 7th, 2013 City Council meeting, staff has moved forward with further developing a recommendation for providing a new ESL program through the Recreation division of the Community Services department. Staff proposes to offer 6 new contractual classes to address the need for ESL and citizenship preparation courses in the community. In this model, contractual instructors would offer introductory, intermediate and advanced ESL courses. Additionally, 2 conversation courses and 1 citizenship course would be offered. Staff recommends beginning citizenship and intro ESL in the fall or winter 2013 as these are courses that have not been offered recently by the School District and therefore do not have an existing student base. Furthermore, it will take some time to promote these new offerings properly through the department brochure, website, social media, etc.

Since the current instructor has shown willingness to continue some of the classes which have been offered through the School District, it is possible that intermediate and advanced ESL and/or conversation classes might be able to start as early as this summer. These courses have a developed student base which would likely transition smoothly to the classes being offered by the City.

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As was expressed in the staff report at the May 7th meeting, the Recreation division uses contractual instructors who work on a 70/30 split of the revenues. Under this arrangement the instructor retains 70% of the course fee and the City keeps 30%. None of the existing contract instructors work more than 12 hours per week. Due to Internal Revenue Service recommendations, staff does not recommend any contract instructors work beyond the 12 hour level to remain consistent with our current practice. Additionally, per IRS recommendations, contract workers should not use resources or materials provided by the City. Many contract instructors deal with book or materials costs by charging the students a material fee, which is something that could be done for the ESL courses. Unless directed otherwise, staff will proceed to work with the existing instructor to begin offering 2-3 courses this summer. Should the instructor ultimately decide that she does not want to offer contract courses, staff recommends that these courses start in the fall or winter to ensure that there is enough time to bring other instructors onboard and to promote properly the new course offerings. Staff recommends that these classes be offered at a slightly increased rate of \$85 per student. Additionally, the teacher(s) may require a materials fee which would need to be further defined. If student enrollments remain at the same levels as are currently enrolled through the Adult School, this would mean that a contractual instructor could make \$30 or more per hour.

The pros of the contractual arrangements are that the City and the instructor share the rewards, but the instructor largely bears the risk. If enrollment is strong in a contractual class, then the City and the instructor both benefit financially. If enrollment is not strong, the City can cancel the class and does not pay out any direct costs. However, the downside is that as this subject matter is more academic than some other recreational offerings, it is possible that it might be more difficult to retain instructors who are willing to work under a contractual relationship.

At the May 7th meeting, Councilmember Gold requested that staff also look at providing ESL courses using staff positions. Since staff is aware of Council's desire to avoid adding additional staff members who draw benefits, it is possible to hire instructor(s) as hourly, at will staff members who do not work more than 19 hours per week. Under this arrangement, the instructors would be paid a set hourly rate. The position of Recreation Specialist could be used for this purpose, and the salary could be set somewhere in the range used for this position which is \$10.28-\$30.86.

The benefit of this model is that instructors are guaranteed an hourly rate, and as a result, retention of instructors might be easier. Additionally, instructors could take advantage of City resources, such as Xeroxing, which could be more intensive for this type of course. Under this model it might be possible to have a single instructor offer more than 2 or 3 classes. The downside to this model is that there is no guarantee of cost recovery from student fees for the City. Additionally, should enrollment drop below a certain amount, the instructor is still motivated to teach the class as it has no impact on their hourly rate, and there is less impetus for staff to cancel a class that the community has grown to expect. Additionally, in this scenario, instructor pay is not tied to the number of class participants, so sometimes there is decreased motivation on the part of the instructor to recruit more students and promote the class. Finally this model sets a precedent of bringing on instructors who are staff members which is a practice that was discontinued in the past through the Recreation division. If an hourly staff model is

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implemented, it may make more sense to transition the program to the Library which has hourly employees who teach as part of their regular duties.

Staff recommends that the City decline the State Department of Education Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant funding at this time. There is a great deal of testing of students and reporting requirements as a part of this grant which might net \$10,000-\$12,000 for fiscal year 2013-14. As a result, it is expected that a great deal of staff time would be spent on these non-classroom related activities. As the grant funding level is based on improvements made by students at the introductory level of ESL, staff recommends that an introductory ESL course be initiated, and that during the first year, student progress be tracked based on guidance from the Department of Education. Should this class prove promising in terms of the grant, then the City could apply for the grant directly for fiscal year 2014-15.

The School District has had a policy of allowing students to join their courses mid-session and then prorate the fee based on the remaining number of classes for the session. Staff recommends that there be a cutoff date by which students can join each session. Staff further recommends against prorating fees, regardless of when a student joins a class.

FISCAL IMPACT

Should City Council support the staff recommendation to offer 6 contractual classes based on a 73/30 split, there would not be a substantial negative fiscal impact to the City since classes will only be offered if they sustain an enrollment level which provides remuneration at a level that will attract and retain an instructor. In fact, should these courses be successful, then revenues for the Recreation division would increase.

Should City Council decide to hire hourly staff instructors to provide ESL and citizenship courses as a community service, staff estimates that the cost would be approximately \$50,000 per year. It is difficult to determine at this time whether the City would recover this full value through student fees. Staff could return to a future Council meeting to further define a fee structure.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the following:

- That the City begin offering 6 new contractual courses through the Recreation division of the Community Services department.
- That these courses comprise introductory, intermediate and advanced ESL, two English conversation courses and one citizen preparation course
- That multiple contract instructors be brought onboard to teach these courses with no one teacher working more than 12 hours per week
- That 2-3 courses be offered in the summer (pending confirmation of available instructor) and that the additional courses be initiated in fall or winter 2013
- That each course be offered at \$85 each, with a 70/30 split with the instructor
- That the City declines the California Department of Education Workforce Investment Act (WIA) grant during fiscal year 2013-14
- That staff carefully track the progress of students, especially at the introductory level to maintain the ability to apply for the WIA grant next fiscal year

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- That staff monitor the enrollment levels and progress of the program as a whole and report back to City Council on these aspects after the end of the fall session of courses


Don Rhodes, Director of
Administrative Services


Nancy Hunt-Coffey
Approved By
