



City of Racine, Wisconsin
AGENDA BRIEFING MEMORADUM

AGENDA DATE: April 8, 2024 – Finance and Personnel
Committee
April 15, 2024 – Common Council

SUBJECT: Communication sponsored by Alder Perez, requesting that the City of Racine provide a bilingual customer service representative to the Cesar Chavez Community Center at least three times a week with staggered hours including Saturday so that City Services like permitting and additional information can be available for the Latino/Hispanic community.

PREPARED BY: Tara McMenamin, Director of Customer Service, City Clerk

SUMMARY: While Department of Customer Service management understands the importance of providing equitable access to city services for all members of our community, we must prioritize the allocation of our resources based on operational feasibility and the actual demand for such services.

- 1. Staff Limitations:** The department responsible for providing customer service is relatively new, and staff are still in the process of being cross-trained. At present, we do not have sufficient personnel who are fully trained in all necessary areas to effectively serve as bilingual representatives. The cost of allocating overtime, for one employee, to cover the requested hours would be slightly over \$60,000. The Chavez Center is not currently open on Saturdays, the cost to open and close the facility during closed hours would add additional costs. Lastly to accept cash dual counting cash payments over \$2,000 would require additional staff. Hiring additional staff would incur significant costs, including training expenses and operational overheads.
- 2. Financial Implications:** Introducing bilingual services would require considerable investment, including training, installing necessary equipment such as cameras and vaults, and ensuring compliance with security and cash handling protocols. The estimated startup costs for these initiatives are substantial without requesting estimates from contractors and an additional \$10,000 to \$20,000 should be allocated.
- 3. Operational Challenges:** Adhering to election and cash handling requirements necessitates dedicated space and enhanced security measures, including restricted access to certain areas of the community center. Accommodating these requirements would pose logistical challenges and may disrupt the current operations of the center, particularly regarding room allocation and access restrictions.
- 4. Another operational challenge would be staffing.** While the DoCS currently has 3 bilingual employees this is not a guarantee. With three staff currently bilingual if one is on vacation, one is sick, and another assisting at the community center a staff from DoCS to help city hall functions would not be available. While there are many departments within the City that have a bilingual employee the DoCS regularly helps others with translating for the Spanish Community regarding City

services.

5. **Limited Demand:** Upon consulting with the Director of Parks, we found that there have been no significant requests from residents for bilingual services specifically related to the Department of Customer Service at community centers. Additionally, the existing bilingual parks staff can aid citizens as needed, thus mitigating the immediate need for additional bilingual resources at the Chavez facility.
6. **City Access:** While the Cesar Chavez Center does have a large Hispanic population, there are many other community centers such as the John Bryant area that would not be provided the same service. City Hall is centrally located and equally accessible to the North and South sides of the City, which is the best solution until a more robust resolution can be implemented that incorporates the city in its entirety.

While I cannot in good conscience agree with the proposed item, I do believe that there are opportunities to provide better customer service to City residents. However, while DoCS is still extremely new it is time to cross train employees, improve our current services, and work to start a narrative change that proves to the community we are dedicated to improving what we currently offer. Stretching ourselves too thin at the beginning will not allow us to provide our best service. DoCS will continue to remain committed to enhancing accessibility and inclusivity in our operations and will continue to explore opportunities to better serve the needs of our diverse population, including researching more opportunities to improve services and bilingual services as we grow and work to continually improve.

RECOMMENDATION: That the request of Alder Perez be denied.

FISCAL NOTE: Approximately \$90,000 a year for staffing and \$10,000 for startup costs.