



LGBTQ QUALITY OF LIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION

RECOMMENDATION 20210614-2F: Support for the Asian American Quality of Life Commission's Budget Recommendation Concerning the Translation of Emergency Communications

Recommendation

City Council should fully fund the Asian American Quality of Life Commission's budget recommendation concerning the translation of emergency communications.

1. Add \$100,000 to the City's Public Information Office so departments have a central pool of funding to facilitate translation and interpretation services. The existence of this pool must be communicated widely to departments.
2. Include the Equity Office, Resiliency Officer, and other appropriate community representatives in Emergency Planning, Response, and After-Action reports in order to assure that an Equity Perspective is fully integrated into these activities.
3. Establish stand-by contracts with key community organizations who are already connected with Asian communities. In an emergency, these organizations can (1) be activated to review translated communications and (2) quickly disseminate those communications to the community.
4. Add \$100,000 to the Emergency Operations Center budget for translations, interpretations, and emergency communications to non-English speaking communities.
5. Provide all City-contracted non-profit agencies access to the City's pre-screened vendors for translation services and any interpretation services that become available. This would assist contracted non-profits in serving the entire community.

Rationale

Members of the Asian American Community with limited English proficiency have difficulty accessing COVID-19 pandemic information and vaccinations. This communication difficulty was exacerbated during the City's emergency response to Winter Storm Uri. The Asian American Community had to quickly identify and activate volunteers to assist during the winter storm emergency (see Austin American Statesman article March 12, 2021).

Time-sensitive messaging from the City is often only provided in English or English and Spanish. Asian Americans are the fastest growing demographic in Austin/Travis County and the City must provide timely information in major Asian languages. The City has responded to previously identified needs by establishing approved vendors for translation in multiple languages, but many Departments are unaware or don't see Asian language translations as a priority. Most City offices have been closed during the pandemic and many City staff were also impacted by the weather and water emergencies.

Emergency communications are primarily generated by the City Public Information Office, Austin Public Health, and the Emergency Operations Center. Communities of Color and



other marginalized communities are most impacted by emergencies, but equity is seldom considered in the initial response.

With no system in place, Austin's Asian population contacts the Asian American Quality of Life Commission, the Network of Asian American Organizations (NAAO), the Asian American Resource Center, and local non-profits for assistance. In response, the Asian American Quality of Life Commission identified volunteers in the community to translate emergency guides generated by Councilmember Casar's office into multiple languages.

Commissioners of the Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission also worked with the community to identify translators to assist individual families in accessing warming centers, food, water, and other emergency resources. That assistance is also being provided to help members of Austin's Asian American community obtain vaccinations.

Vote

Date of Approval: June 14, 2021

Motioned By: Chair Gonzales

Seconded By: Commissioner Curry

For:

1. Baeza
2. Chavez
3. Curette
4. Curry
5. Dowling
6. Gonzales
7. Kirby
8. Martinez
9. Taylor
10. Wollerson

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent:

1. Gonzalez
2. Gorczynski
3. Hines

Attest: *Kathryn Gonzales*
Kathryn Gonzales, Chair