



Memorandum

TO: PUBLIC SAFETY, FINANCE, AND
STRATEGIC SUPPORT COMMITTEE

FROM: Edgardo Garcia

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: October 3, 2018

Approved

Date

10-8-18

**SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL POLICY PRIORITY #17: SCHOOL CROSSING GUARD
INNOVATIVE HIRING STRATEGIES**

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the status report on the implementation of the City Council Policy Priority #17: School Crossing Guard Innovative Hiring Strategies and cross-reference acceptance of the report on the November 6, 2018 City Council agenda.

BACKGROUND

The Police Department's School Safety & Education Unit is responsible for contributing to the safety of school age children as they travel to and from school. For more than 70 years, the Unit's pedestrian safety program has helped prevent fatalities by providing School Crossing Guards at designated intersections throughout the City.

On October 4, 2017, the Rules and Open Government Committee considered a memo from Vice Mayor Carrasco that identified difficulty with the recruitment and retention of School Crossing Guards, directing staff to develop new and innovative strategies to hire for Crossing Guard positions.¹ The Vice Mayor recommended adding the proposal for consideration at the next City Council priority setting session. The Committee approved the recommendation and forwarded the item to priority setting.

On October 17, 2017, the City Council conducted a priority setting session where the Council added this item² to the Council Policy Priority List as priority number 17.

This memo provides an update on staff's progress in implementing the Council's direction to develop new and innovative strategies to hire crossing guards.

¹ http://sanjose.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?meta_id=667027

² <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=5489475&GUID=79F4C4AF-9E8D-41E9-988D-E4F7F9C849C6>

ANALYSIS

Staff began work on Council Policy Priority #17 by pursuing a range of different recruitment strategies. Staff also reviewed Crossing Guard Program staffing data in an effort to understand the scale of the recruitment challenge. As part of this review, the number of filled crossing guards was compared to the number of authorized positions in the Adopted Budget. During the review, staff identified a misalignment in how the number of authorized budgeted crossing guard positions are accounted for in the Program versus optimum staffing levels per intersection; the Program has been operating in this manner since the 2011-2012 Fiscal Year.

Currently, the Program employs 244 crossing guards to staff 121 approved intersections. Staff operated under the assumption that there were 280 crossing guard positions authorized in the budget, which would leave 36 vacant positions; however, staff has since discovered that the 280 figure does not correspond to the budget. Instead, it corresponds to the number of positions necessary to staff the 121 approved intersections at optimum levels. In other words, it corresponds to the *need* for crossing guards, not the *budget* allocated for crossing guards. Because this misalignment was not identified, budget requests were not brought forward to increase crossing guard levels to address optimum staffing levels.

After the misalignment was discovered during the preparation of this memorandum, staff has attempted to determine how many crossing guard positions are authorized in the budget. The 2018-19 Adopted Operating Budget includes 35.17 full time equivalent (FTE) crossing guard positions. Each FTE assumes a 40-hour work week, so the Program could support 35.17 guards if each guard worked full time. As crossing guards are part time, typically working around 10 hours per week, the number of positions the budget can support is substantially more than 35.17; the part-time and seasonal nature of crossing guard work makes it difficult to translate the FTE figure into a precise number of crossing guard positions, but staff has confirmed that the Program overspent its budget in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, which suggests its staffing levels in that year exceeded the budget authorization.

The optimum level of staffing may change based on changing conditions at a given intersection over time. However, the current assessment process to determine the staffing needs at each intersection is based on a subjective review by staff. The Program would benefit from having a clearly defined assessment process with objective criterion to determine staffing needs for each intersection. The new challenge is to review the current process and establish criterion to determine the optimum number of staff needed in the Program and then align the budget with that number.

In response to the initial direction in the Council Policy Priority to develop innovative recruitment strategies, the next section of this report provides an overview of the work staff has done to enhance recruitment. After that, the following section outlines a work plan staff has developed to address the new challenges staff discovered while working on the Council Policy Priority.

Recruitment Strategies

Recruiting for crossing guard positions can be challenging for a number of reasons. First, during a strong economy, crossing guards may seek jobs with more hours or may move out of the area due to the cost of living. Second, crossing guards work a split schedule with one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon, which may not be as attractive as the continuous schedules offered by other part-time jobs. Third, the requirement that crossing guards pass a background check can reduce the available hiring pool. Finally, a vacancy in one the Unit's School Safety Supervisor position has hindered recruitment efforts; when filled, this position allows the unit to devote more time to recruitment efforts. The Unit is currently recruiting to fill this position.

To address these challenges, and in response to Council direction to develop innovative hiring strategies, the Unit has adopted several additional recruitment strategies. These strategies have seen success, as the 244 crossing guards currently employed by the Program is an increase from 221 crossing guards in 2017-2018 and 211 crossing guards in 2016-2017. The following recruitment strategies have assisted in increasing the hiring of crossing guards:

1. **Hiring a fourth School Safety Supervisor:** Previously, when the Unit had a fourth School Safety Supervisor, substantial staff time was devoted to recruitment activities. The Department is currently recruiting to fill this vacant fourth position, which has been made ongoing in the 2018-2019 Budget. Once the vacancy is filled, the Unit will be able to increase its focus on recruitment activities.
2. **Getting the word out through a wide variety of channels:** The Unit has advertised the crossing guard positions through multiple channels, including: posting flyers at community centers, libraries, and local businesses; airing public service announcements; attending community events and events sponsored by council offices (e.g., senior mall walks); using council newsletters to spread the word to a large audience; online outlets (e.g., NextDoor); SJPd social media sites; and building partnerships within and across departments to join in existing outreach efforts (e.g., police recruitment events, Human Resource Job Fairs, Crime Prevention events, and recreational classes).
3. **Working with schools:** The Unit has worked with the schools to hire crossing guards and has seen success in hiring staff who already work at schools. For example, an individual employed for "yard duty" during recesses and lunchtimes may also work in the morning and afternoon as a crossing guard. The Unit partners with schools to advertise open positions to the broader school community; the method used to advertise depends on how the individual school prefers to communicate with parents and caregivers.
4. **Targeted recruitment around intersections with staffing needs:** Given the short hours crossing guards work (i.e., one hour twice a day), they tend to prefer to work at intersections near their residence. The Unit has developed strategies for geographically targeted recruitment around intersections. One of the most successful strategies used is

the posting of signs around the intersection in need of staff; those who see the signs as they pass through the intersection are likely to live in the surrounding area. The Unit has also worked with the management of housing complexes near intersections to distribute information about job opportunities. Additionally, the Unit has targeted outreach to low-income senior housing complexes near schools.

5. **Expedited Hiring Process:** The Unit and other stakeholders have taken steps to help expedite the hiring and background process, thus increasing the success of hiring. The City's Human Resources Department aids the Unit by filtering applications and forwarding them to the Unit daily. The Unit then reviews applications and contacts applicants within one business day of the date the application is submitted. Also, the interview process has been expedited and backgrounds are immediately begun on candidates who successfully complete interviews. Additionally, the Department's Background Unit has designated a background investigator specifically for crossing guard applicants. Due to the expedited hiring process, the Unit has seen fewer applicants drop out of the application process.

Recruiting and retention for crossing guards is an ongoing and challenging effort. With the addition of the fourth supervisor, the Department is confident ongoing efforts will be maintained.

School Safety & Education Program Work Plan

As discussed above, staff has discovered that there is a misalignment between the optimum number of crossing guards to staff approved intersections and the number of crossing guards authorized in the budget. Because staff has targeted Program hiring to the need and not the allocated budget, the Program exceeded its allocated budget in the 2017-18 fiscal year. This section provides an overview of why staffing needs at approved intersections have increased in recent years and sets out a work plan to bring the Program and the budget back into alignment.

Every October, the Unit conducts an annual head count at each intersection. This includes counting the number of elementary and middle school students crossing at the intersections. Based on this data and other relevant factors, the Unit determines the appropriate crossing guard staffing levels at each intersection. Some intersections may only need one crossing guard, while others may need three or four. Using the current assessment model, staff has determined that 280 crossing guards are warranted to fully staff the 121 approved intersections. The Department would need to request additional funding through the budget process to meet this target.

There are several factors that have led to an increase in the number of crossing guards needed per intersection, including opening intersections that have a higher risk to pedestrian safety, changing driving conditions, and increasing pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

Increase in Vehicular and Pedestrian Traffic

The City of San José has increased in population, which directly correlates with an increase in vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The Unit recommends staffing levels adjustments in response to changing traffic levels to provide safe passage for students; this might equate to an increase in the number of crossing guards needed to staff an intersection at optimum levels.

Driving Conditions

Driving conditions in the City have gradually changed. With technology evolving, drivers have greater access to electronic devices, such as smart phones, tablets, and interactive dashboards, that can divert a driver's focus from pedestrian crossings. A greater number of distracted drivers equates to a greater risk to the safety of pedestrians. An intersection once assigned two crossing guards may now be assigned three crossing guards, to adjust for the increased risk to pedestrians.

The above factors have impacted the assessed staffing needs at intersections and require ongoing evaluation. The Department has outlined a work plan to evaluate the Program and will return to Council through the 2019-2010 Budget Process with recommendations. The work plan is outlined below.

School Safety & Education Program Work Plan

- Continue to work with schools to evaluate crossing guard needs and provide safe passage for students.
- Explore creating objective criteria to help determine the number of crossing guards warranted at each intersection. Currently, the Department of Transportation (DOT) provides an objective rating, referred to as the Safety Index, to determine if an intersection meets the Council's criteria to be staffed. Intersections with a Safety Index rating of 120 or above meet the criteria for being in the Program. However, the number of crossing guards assigned to operate at an intersection is not determined by the Safety Index and can fluctuate over time based upon various factors (changes in driving behavior, etc.). The Department will work with DOT to determine a methodology to more clearly identify the number of crossing guards warranted per intersection.
- Work with DOT to determine a process to provide updates to the Safety Index assessment and work with DOT to determine if intersections should be re-evaluated periodically. Safety Index assessments are conducted at the time a request for a new location is submitted. In 2010, every staffed intersection was reevaluated and safety index numbers were updated. Over the course of time, however, various factors may influence a safety index number, as well as a school closure/opening, school boundary changes, and increases in population due to new housing development. Periodic reassessment of intersections would keep safety index scores current.
- Work with the Budget Office to right-size the Program, based on a needs assessment, and bring recommendations to Council through the 2019-2020 budget process.
- Develop controls to ensure that the Program's hiring is aligned to its allocated budget.

COUNCIL PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop new and innovative strategies to hire School Crossing Guards.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

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Over the past year, the Unit has developed and implemented a wide variety of strategies for Crossing Guard recruitment, as discussed above. As a result of this work, staff believes this Council Policy Priority has been implemented. To provide safe passage for school aged pedestrians, the Unit recommends a work plan be implemented to reevaluate the process and frequency of safety index studies and process for determining the number of crossing guards assigned to intersections.

CONCLUSION

The San Jose Police Department will continue to recruit Crossing Guards to maintain a successful School Safety & Education Program. Year-round recruitment is necessary to ensure the Program remains fully staffed. As discussed in this memorandum, there is a misalignment between the Program's budget and its staffing needs, which will need to be addressed in a future budget process.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the Department of Transportation.

/s/

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Chief of Police

For questions, please contact Captain Mike Kihmm at (408) 537-1890.