



File #: 15-1083, Version: 1

### REPORT TO COUNCIL

#### SUBJECT

Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the City's Crossing Guard Program

#### BACKGROUND

Council directed staff to prepare a report on policy options related to the City's Crossing Guard program for its consideration during the December 15, 2015 regular Council meeting. Council also directed staff to provide regular reports on the status of staffing and services; unless Council action is required, these updates will be provided via the City Manager's Bi-Weekly Report (CMBWR) to Council available on the City's Website, on the City Manager's Blog at <http://sunnyvale.ca.gov/Newsroom/CityManagersBlog.aspx>.

The City's Crossing Guard Program was implemented approximately 50 years ago. This General Fund program is managed by the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and provides services at 38 intersections throughout the City to offer safer crossings for students walking and biking to and from school. The Crossing Guards are classified as Casual, which means the employees do not receive the same level of benefits that permanent full-time employees receive, but do receive some benefits (e.g. Workers' Compensation and sick leave).

Over the last several years, the City has experienced a decline in applications received for the crossing guard positions, as well as an increase in turnover rates, which has resulted in the need for supplemental backfill through the use of full time DPS staff or the inability to provide services for some intersections. Staff has been working to address programmatic needs, as reported to Council in August, October and November CMBWRs, and has taken several steps to recruit and retain crossing guards, such as:

- Completed a salary survey and found that the City's compensation is in line with the current market rate;
- Evaluated and modified the salary step placement requirements allowing for quicker movement within the salary range to address retention concerns; and
- Concentrated recruitment efforts via social media and other communication methods; for example, the crime prevention unit has worked with each school and the Senior Center to provide information on recruitment efforts, and staff has posted the job announcements at the Sunnyvale Senior Center, Santa Clara Senior Center, NOVA, the local community colleges and with all of the administrations of the schools.

Council has the following policy options:

1. Amend the City's Salary Resolution with a new salary schedule for the Crossing Guards. Since this is a non-represented casual position, salary adjustments do not occur through negotiated labor processes.

2. Sponsor a Study Issue on the effectiveness of the Crossing Guard program and suggestions for improvement and stabilization
3. Consider alternative methods of service delivery options for the City's Crossing Guard Program, in accordance with the guidelines in Council Policy 7.3.6 [Service Delivery Options <http://sunnyvale.ca.gov/Portals/0/Sunnyvale/CodesAndPolicies/7.03.06.pdf>](http://sunnyvale.ca.gov/Portals/0/Sunnyvale/CodesAndPolicies/7.03.06.pdf).
4. Take no policy action and allow staff to continue current robust recruitment and retention efforts, and report regularly (via CMBWR) on progress.

## **EXISTING POLICY**

### **Council Policy 7.3.1 Legislative Management - Goals and Policies**

**Goal 7.3D:** Maintain a quality work force, Consistent with state and federal laws, City Charter, and adopted policies in order to assure that City services are provided in an effective, efficient, and high quality manner.

**Policy 7.3D.1:** Maintain a recruitment and selection process that ensures a highly competent workforce.

### **General Plan Chapter 6 - Safety and Noise, Policy SN-3.5 - Facilitate the Safe Movement of Pedestrians, Bicyclists and Vehicles**

### **Council Policy 7.3.6 Service Delivery Options**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for considering alternative methods of service delivery, whether that be the contracting of services currently provided by in-house staff, or bringing in-house a service currently provided by contract.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

N/A

## **DISCUSSION**

The program, currently budgeted for 45 crossing guards to cover 38 intersections, provides services to the Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, and Cupertino School Districts. The job structure of Crossing Guards offers seasonal, limited and unusual working hours. The work schedule is generally 10 to 15 hours per week during the regular school year with no work during school breaks and summer. It requires working a split shift, beginning in the morning as school starts and returning in the afternoon when school is letting out. In addition, applicants are subject to a criminal background check, fingerprinting, and a medical exam that includes a physical exam, range of motion back exam, tuberculosis test and drug test.

As of November 30, 2015, there are 35 Crossing Guard positions filled (10 vacancies). Four of the 35 current Crossing Guards are currently on leave. To provide supplemental coverage, DPS has been utilizing Cadets, Vehicle Abatement Officers (VAOs), Community Services Officers (CSOs), and Public Safety Officers (PSOs). Cadets and VAOs have been reassigned to Crossing Guard, and CSOs and PSOs on duty but not assigned to a priority call for service have been providing assistance in staffing the intersections.

There are currently seven applicants in various stages of the recruitment process. Statistics related to the crossing guard program and referenced in this report are provided in Attachment 1.

### Salary Survey and Methodology

The City Council has a long-standing methodology of surveying 10 municipal agencies (identified in the Sunnyvale Employees' Association Memorandum of Understanding) for external salary comparisons for the various bargaining groups. In August 2015, the City conducted a salary survey (Attachment 2) using this same methodology. Five of the agencies are not comparable due to contracting the services with private service providers or school districts. With the five agencies that have a comparable classification, staff found that the City's compensation for Crossing Guards is in line with the current market rate. The average top step hourly rate is \$14.44, and the Sunnyvale Crossing Guard top step hourly rate is \$14.50, or 0.4% higher. The outcome of this survey did not indicate a change needed and, as a result, staff did not take action to increase salary rates or add a higher top step to the salary table.

The Council, upon review of the salary survey, may make its own adjustments beyond the salary survey findings. Since this is a non-represented casual position, salary adjustments do not occur through negotiated labor processes.

### Retention

The City's turnover rate for this position has been increasing over the past several years; in FY 2014/15 the turnover rate was 46.6% compared with 22.5% in FY 2012/13. Based on a survey of former Crossing Guards that separated from the City in FY 2013/14 and FY 2014/15, approximately one-third obtained full time employment, while 18% moved out of the area and another 18% left for undisclosed personal reasons. Of those surveyed, 7% were rehired for the next school year. Based on these findings, programs or initiatives that would work toward retaining staff are not easily designed, given that separations are not for workplace conditions or morale but rather for personal choices.

### Recruitment Efforts

Likely due to a strong economy and low unemployment rate, the number of applicants has been decreasing. The City received 45 applicants in 2015, compared with 96 in 2013 (53% decrease). As noted above, approximately 32% of Crossing Guard separations over the last two years were due to full time employment obtained elsewhere. Staff has increased recruitment efforts through collaboration with the School Districts and the City's social media platforms, and has included outreach with local colleges, NOVA Workforce Services, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara Senior Centers, Downtown Streets Team, Sunnyvale Neighborhood Associations and several other public locations to advertise the need for crossing guards. The crime prevention unit has worked with each of the schools within the City to recruit and make them aware of the staffing situation. A pay rate well above the average may work to recruit and retain crossing guards, but will not compete with compensation and benefits offered through full-time employment, which is a large part of employee departures.

As part of the City's recruitment and retention efforts, in August 2015, the City modified program requirements to provide movement on the salary schedule based on hours of work or time in the position, which allows greater flexibility and opportunities for employees to achieve the top step (Step 5) earlier than previously available. The schedule previously required 200 hours of service to advance from Step 1 to Step 2. To advance from Step 2 or higher, 420 hours of service was required in each Step. The recent modification to the program reduces the time period at each Step. The City also began placing new hire Crossing Guards at Step 4. Advancing from Step 4 to Step 5 requires 12 months and 400 hours of service with a performance rating of satisfactory or better. The salary step

placement of current Crossing Guards was also adjusted according to these new guidelines.

### Private Contract Services

Staff contacted neighboring agencies that use contracted crossing guard services, and all provided high regard for the professional contract services as an effective program for their community. The cities indicated that all personnel aspects for hiring, staffing, termination and supervision were managed by the contractor. All workers' compensation, employee appreciation and recognition are also managed by the contractor. The cost of the services is negotiated based upon the hours and number of locations, and the City may opt to include retention efforts in the contract negotiations.

Should Council direct staff to study private contract services to replace or supplement the City's Crossing Guard Program, Council Policy 7.3.6 *Service Delivery Options* provides clear guidelines to begin the process.

### Policy Options

As staff has reviewed and monitored the Crossing Guard program over the past several years, there are three policy areas to stabilize the recruitment and retention of Crossing Guards:

1. **Compensation.** The recent salary survey, which used the same methodology that staff has historically used to initiate an increase, did not yield statistics in support of a salary increase. Nevertheless, anecdotal information suggests that there are Crossing Guards that desire higher pay to which Council may want to respond. Council may direct staff to:
  - a. Increase the current hourly rate;
  - b. Add a Step 6;
  - c. Offer longevity pay; the City could offer eligible Crossing Guards additional pay (such as a standard 5%) after a defined amount of service. Staff's initial recommendation would be longevity pay after seven years of service.

If Council directs staff to make compensation changes, the estimated annual costs are outlined in the Fiscal Impact section.

2. **Retention.** The Crossing Guard position is unique in terms of work schedule, due to the morning and afternoon shift and to the seasonal school year calendar. Such a unique job specification is not as attractive to candidates in a competitive, booming economy where other positions, with more flexibility, are readily available.

Based on the survey responses from former Crossing Guards, the primary reasons for separations were significant life choices, such as relocating out of the area or obtaining full time employment, not attributed to workplace or job dissatisfaction. Recruitment and retention efforts, no matter how successful, will not overcome those choices.

3. **Program Design.** The changing landscape of the City may warrant further study of the locations where Crossing Guards are currently stationed. To determine if the City's program is effective and appropriate, Council may consider one or both of the following:
  - (a) A consultant's review of the number of Crossing Guards, locations and traffic conditions;
  - (b) Contracting out for professional services to provide and administer a Crossing Guard

program.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Fiscal impact is dependent upon the direction from Council. Analysis to supplement or replace the program in any way will include consideration of the current budget, and other relevant factors; in FY 2015/16, the DPS operating budget includes approximately \$279,000 for crossing guards and direct program administration. The current budget includes approximately \$5,000 per Crossing Guard.

After insurances and leaves are considered, every one dollar per hour increase is equal to approximately \$1.10 in cost; this applies to any kind of wage increase, such as if Council directs staff to raise the current hourly rate, add a Step 6, or add longevity pay. For FY 2015/16, a 5% hourly increase would make the top step \$15.2251 per hour.

Direction from Council will result in the following estimated budget increases:

	<u>FY 2015/16</u>	<u>20 Year Total</u>	<u>Cost Multiplier</u>
<u>Compensation:</u>			
Each increase of 5% per hour	\$11,240	\$224,800	(x # of increases)
<u>Program Design</u>			
Increase budgeted number of positions (Cost per Crossing Guard)	\$5,000	\$100,000	(x # of positions added)
Increase budgeted number of positions and add 5% per hour (Cost per Crossing Guard)	\$16,490	\$329,800	(x # of positions added)

Staff would need to evaluate the overall fiscal impact of any Council directed compensation change to determine if it warranted a budget modification, or if it could be absorbed with the current FY 2015/16 DPS Operating Budget.

If the City were to contract out for crossing guard services, as long as the cost of the contract was equal to or less than the current budget, there would be no fiscal impact. Staff feels that this option can be considered within the current FY 2015/16 DPS Operating Budget.

Should Council direct staff prepare a Study Issue paper to review the crossing guard program and make recommendations, it would include additional resources needed for a consultant to complete the review, as staff are at capacity and cannot complete this in-house; a budget modification would be required if Council directed staff to pursue this option.

Funding Source

The Crossing Guard Program is funded by the General Fund.

**PUBLIC CONTACT**

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, at the Sunnyvale Senior Center, Community Center and Department of Public Safety; and by making the agenda and report available at the Sunnyvale Public Library, the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's website.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Direct staff to continue robust recruitment and retention efforts and return in six months with a progress report.
2. Direct staff to introduce a Resolution amending the City's Salary Resolution with a new salary schedule for the Casual Crossing Guard and Casual Seasonal Crossing Guard classifications.
3. Direct staff to prepare a Study Issue paper on the effectiveness of the Crossing Guard program and suggestions for improvement and stabilization.
4. Direct staff to consider alternative methods of service delivery options for the City's Crossing Guard Program, in accordance with the guidelines in Council Policy 7.3.6 *Service Delivery Options* and report back to Council with recommendations for service delivery.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff makes no recommendation and will continue our robust recruitment efforts to employ Crossing Guards.

Feedback received from crossing guards who have resigned over the last two years identified two primary reasons for leaving casual employment: (1) full-time employment opportunities and (2) relocation out of the area. Staff will continue to address program staffing shortages through concentrated recruitment efforts, modifying salaries or salary steps if and when appropriate, and by assigning additional personnel to program administration.

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### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Crossing Guard Program Statistics
2. Crossing Guard Salary Survey