

FUNDING FOR INTERPRETATION SERVICES FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS



SILVER SPRING CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

December 16th, 2021

County Executive Marc Elrich

[Delivered via e-mail]

Advice from the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board re:

FUNDING FOR INTERPRETATION SERVICES FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS

Dear County Executive Marc Elrich,

Since March 2020, nearly all county meetings, including Citizen Advisory Board meetings, have had to be held online, either via Zoom or, in some cases, Microsoft Teams. One of the pandemic silver linings has been that we have seen increased participation from the community with the additional remote options. Community members who for a variety of reasons may not have been able to leave home or work to attend a meeting prior to the pandemic have now been able to do so.

Recently, the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board was holding its monthly “Neighborhoods Committee” meeting, where the focus of the meeting was hearing from the Long Branch Community. When reaching out to community leaders in the Long Branch Community in hopes of having them invite community members to attend our meeting, one of the leaders of the civic organization CHEER (Community, Health and Empowerment through Education and Research) asked us if translation services were available to encourage native Spanish speakers to attend the meeting. In researching this topic, we learned that unfortunately such services were not provided by the county and that they could cost up to \$350 per meeting. Unfortunately, county advisory boards are not provided a budget that can cover these costs.

We are asking the County Council to consider two things. First, in the upcoming budget cycle, the County Council should include funding so that all public meetings, including Citizen Advisory Board meetings, are able to use simultaneous interpretation services for multiple language, including American Sign Language. Second, we are asking that part of the initial funding be specifically set aside for Citizen Advisory Board meetings. Because the citizen’s advisory board meetings are a vital connection between the county council and all community members, it is particularly important that these meetings are provided the translation services.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Lysette House*
Chair

FUNDING FOR INTERPRETATION SERVICES FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS

Sofia Bushen*
Vice-Chair

Parliamentarian
Melanie Fonder Kaye*

Secretary
Katherine Lucas McKay*

*(*Signatures on file)*

CC: County Council President Gabe Albornoz
Montgomery County Council Members
Jacob Newman, Silver Spring Regional Area Director
Members of the SSCAB