



Council Agenda Report

Department Name: Parks & Recreation
Cost Center: 7003
For Agenda of: May 4, 2021
Placement: Consent
Estimated Time: N/A

FROM: Greg Avakian, Parks and Recreation Director

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SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO RECLASSIFY SIX SUPPLEMENTAL YOUTH SERVICES SITE SPECIALISTS TO SIX FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS

RECOMMENDATION

Approve a Resolution to create six full-time equivalent (FTE) positions due to a reclassification of the Youth Services Site Specialist position.

DISCUSSION

Background – Youth Services a Community & Council Priority

The City of San Luis Obispo provides a wide array of programmatic services for youth including facilities (from parks to Damon Garcia to the SLO Swim Center), contract classes, special events, and before and after school and school break programs. Childcare, via the City's Youth Services Program, has been a vital component of the City's Meta Goal of Economic Recovery and Resiliency. The Community and Council highly value prioritizing and sustaining Youth Services programming. This can be seen in the Measure G-20 priorities which include maintaining youth services and in the 2021-23 Economic Recovery Major City Goal work plan under 1.2 Business Support, whereby the City will provide childcare programming to the community to enable residents to work and fuel the local economy. Youth services programming also supports the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Major City Goal through workforce recruitment and retention by serving as a community partner involved in the SLO County Child Care Study. The division will review, evaluate and implement findings from the study as resources permit. The request that is before Council with this Agenda Report is to approve a reclassification of six youth services program employees from limited benefit to full time equivalent immediately to allow for necessary time and recruitment to facilitate summer 2021 programming.

Hiring Challenges of the Past for Key Youth Services Positions

The recruitment and retention of qualified Youth Services Site Specialists has been a challenge for at least the past five years. Youth Services Site Specialists are responsible for overseeing daily operations for the school age before- and after- school childcare programs (Sun 'N Fun and Club STAR during the school year and school break camps) at an assigned location.

They are responsible for the day-to-day management of a childcare site, including staff supervision, engagement with children and families, curriculum planning and implementation, planning enrichment opportunities (guests, trips, events), collaboration with school and community partners, ensuring an equitable and inclusive environment and upholding division standards.

One of the Site Specialists serves in an administrative role and assists the Youth Services Division Supervisor and Coordinator to plan, organize, produce, and coordinate childcare and youth programming. This position works closely with subsidy partners, focuses on staff onboarding, development, and retention, as well as works in the field at childcare sites year-round. Each Site Specialist position is budgeted at 2080 hours per year and receives limited benefits as these staff run a childcare site ensuring licensing standards are met. These staff interact with and build relationships with school staff, families, and community partners.

Approximately twenty years ago, the City authorized particular supplemental or temporary positions in Parks and Recreation to receive limited benefits (e.g. contributions to health coverage and pension, and time off) in an attempt to address then recruitment and retention issues. These positions are referred to as Limited Benefit Temporary (LBT). The current Youth Services Site Specialist positions are LBT positions. LBT positions are eligible for time off and sick leave benefits in addition to what supplemental staff are typically eligible for. These employees are pre-approved positions to be enrolled in CalPERS upon hire and are eligible for personal time off (PTO) benefits. These employees receive paid time off in the amount of 3% of hours worked, up to a maximum accrual of 40 hours, and accrue sick leave with pay at the rate of twelve days per year of continuous service. Limited benefit temporary staff are not eligible for paid holidays as full-time staff are. Also, these employees are Affordable Care Act (ACA) eligible as they are expected to work shifts greater than 30 hours per week or 130 hours per month continuously for at least four months. They are eligible for health insurance, and the contribution is adjusted annually as required by the ACA.

Historically, the limited benefit temporary positions were effective in solving the recruitment and retention challenges of the early 2000s and staff were in those positions for more than one year at a time. For the past five years, retaining and recruiting for the six Youth Services Site Specialist positions has been a challenge with multiple vacancies per year and continuous recruitments resulting in limited candidate pools. In analyzing recruitment data for the Site Specialist position in 2019, 719 people viewed the job posting (over a six-month window for two vacancies), and only nine applicants applied (1.3% of individuals who view the position apply). Out of the nine applicants only five were qualified and invited to an interview. Out of the five who were invited to an interview, only three attended an interview. Staff offered the position to two of the applicants and they both accepted, however, one of the new employees quit within weeks due to the demands of the position.

Compensation Analysis of Youth Services Supplemental Staff

The Human Resources Department conducted a compensation study in January 2020 that illustrated the City's Youth Services staff salaries were behind the market by approximately twenty-nine percent (29%) and four out of the six benchmark agencies utilized in the compensation study provide full benefits to the Site Specialist position equivalent. Staff made adjustments in the supplemental employee pay schedule in an attempt to address the compensation issue but increased pay has not retained staff at the levels required to effectively run childcare programming.

Over the past five years the division has lost qualified Site Specialists to full-time positions within the City and externally. Currently, the division has only three of the six Site Specialist positions filled with one leaving in June 2021. One of the current Site Specialists has been with the division for almost seven years but the other two have only been in the Site Specialist position for under one year. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the recruitment and retention issue due to safety concerns and exposure risks while working with children. As childcare is in high demand within the City and throughout San Luis Obispo County, providing competitive wages and benefits for these key positions is critical for the overall program's quality and consistency. The City's childcare programs are a critical component in the City's partnership with the San Luis Coastal Unified School District (SLCUSD) in support of learning and development.

Based on the compensation study results and five-year-long recruitment and retention challenges, cost of turnover, and risk of not being able to provide needed youth services programs due to staffing shortages, staff is recommending reclassifying the Limited Benefit Temporary (LBT) positions into six full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, Five Youth Services Site Director positions and One Youth Services Program Assistant position, with benefits and wages comparable to other regular positions requiring similar skills, abilities, and certifications, as part of the 2021-23 Financial Plan. This recommendation was included in the Significant Operating Budget Changes (SOCBs) that were presented to Council at the April 20, 2021 meeting where Strategic Budget Direction was given by Council.

Need to Hire Youth Services Site Director and Program Assistant Positions Early to Operate Summer Programming

To appropriately coordinate and operate summer youth programming, which begins June 14, 2021, Parks and Recreation Department staff is requesting "early" approval of the reclassification of six LBT Youth Services Employees to six FTEs, five Youth Services Site Director positions and one Youth Services Program Assistant position, and to begin job posting and recruitment immediately following Council approval on May 5, 2021. Due to an estimated four-to-six-week recruitment window, staff anticipates at the earliest, a start date of June 10, 2021 for new hires.

If not approved by this separate action, the request will continue to be part of the budget approval on the June 1 and/or June 15, 2021, Council Meeting(s), with an effective budget appropriation on July 1, 2021 and recruitment and hiring to begin after that date.

Staff is presenting this special request now because they are concerned that with a later approval date, and hiring sometime in August at the earliest, that staff would not be able to operate summer programming nor prepare for the 2021-22 school year. For context, in non-pandemic times, the Youth Services Program traditionally begins coordinating summer programming as early as January. However, due to the ongoing changes related to COVID-19 regarding childcare requirements, limited staff availability, and the unknown public health guidance yet to be provided for summer, the team has only been able to keep up with the present childcare needs. It is anticipated that summer programming will continue to be expanded at multiple school sites to accommodate more children in partnership with the District's extended learning programming and comply with County and State health guidelines during the pandemic.

Given the need, early approval from Council allows staff to meet and confer with SLOCEA and advertise and market the positions for a desired June 10, 2021 start date. Staff wants to provide continuity and quality care to the community and families, especially amidst these unprecedented times.

Previous Council or Advisory Body Action

On April 20, 2021, Council reviewed and preliminarily approved the proposed recommended budget amendments for the 21-23 Financial Plan, which included a list of SOBC's, one of which was reclassifying the Youth Services Site Specialists into six full-time equivalent positions, eligible for pay and benefits of comparable regular positions and the associated ongoing costs (see Strategic Budget Direction Council Reading File, Section E: Significant Operating Budget Changes, page 71).

Policy Context

The City's Charter under Section 804 allows City Council to amend or supplement the budget by motion adopted by a majority vote of the council. This request fulfills a Local Revenue Measure G-20 priority which includes maintaining youth services. This request is part of the 2021-23 Economic Recovery Major City Goal work plan under 1.2 Business Support, whereby the City will provide childcare programming to the community to enable residents to work and fuel the local economy.

Public Engagement

Public comment on the item can be provided to the City Council through written correspondence prior to the meeting and through public testimony at the meeting. The Youth Services program has consistently maintained lengthy waitlists of children and families due to capacity requirements and staffing ratio guidelines. Families have expressed challenges with the relationships between children and teaching staff when there are staff turnover at the school sites. In addition, Staff have routinely distributed online newsletters and surveys to the community and families have expressed to the Department a need and desire for expanded childcare programming and capacity.

CONCURRENCE

The City's internal Financial Plan Steering Committee concurs with the recommendations included in this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The California Environmental Quality Act does not apply to the recommended action in this report, because the action does not constitute a "Project" under CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15378.

FISCAL IMPACT

Budgeted: No
Funding Identified: Yes

Budget Year: 2020-2021

Fiscal Analysis:

| Funding Sources | Current FY Cost | Annualized On-going Cost | Total Project Cost |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| General Fund | \$7,000 | \$93,227 | \$100,227 |
| State | | | |
| Federal | | | |
| Fees | | | |
| Other: | | | |
| Total | \$7,000 | \$93,227 | \$100,227 |

On April 20, 2021, Council reviewed and preliminarily approved the proposed recommended budget amendments for the 21-23 Financial Plan, including reclassifying the Youth Services Site Specialists into full-time equivalent positions and the associated ongoing costs. There will be an approximate fiscal impact of \$7,000 from the reclassification and FTE approval for the remaining 20 days of the current fiscal year, which can be accommodated within the Parks and Recreation Department budget. Staff has included the annualized ongoing cost in the preliminary financial plan that will be presented to Council on June 1, 2021.

ALTERNATIVES

The City Council could direct staff to wait to approve the request at the June 15, 2021 budget adoption meeting. This alternative is not recommended due to the impacts to program start times and current staffing vacancies.

Attachments:

a - Draft Resolution