



CITY OF LONG BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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GERALD R. MILLER
CITY MANAGER

May 10, 2005

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file a report on the optimization of the School Crossing Guard Program, and adopt the recommendations of the Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee.

DISCUSSION

On May 3, 2004, the City Manager and City Auditor, at the City Council's request, presented to the Mayor and City Council a management review of the City's Crossing Guard Program (Attachment A). The review provided a background of the program and the cost and status of current crossing guard staffing. In addition, the review provided an explanation of the laws governing and the procedures used by the Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC), the City and the State for assigning locations to be staffed by crossing guards.

The review provided four recommendations for improving and reducing costs of the crossing guard program. They included:

- 1) Developing a Bi-Annual Crossing Guard Deployment Plan that would set a goal of reviewing 25 percent of the approved locations every two years to determine if the corners still meet the criteria for a guard;
- 2) Maintaining collaboration with Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) and the community to update the "Suggested Routes to School" that allows all parties to better plan how to get children safely to schools and determine where crossing guards will be necessary to assist them;
- 3) Constantly exploring new funding opportunities, including public-private partnerships, private sponsorships by businesses or community groups, and volunteer programs; and
- 4) Continuing to explore corollary pedestrian safety systems that improve school zone traffic mitigation strategies such as enhanced signage, pavement markings and more stringent enforcement.

City staff has continued collaborative discussions with the LBUSD, PSAC and employees to implement the above recommendations and to optimize the Crossing Guard Program. The goal of the optimization process is to develop recommendations that will make the program

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

May 10, 2005

Page 2

more cost-effective, while maintaining an appropriate service level to the community and LBUSD.

On December 9, 2004, the Mayor and City Council received an update on City staff optimization efforts (Attachment B). The update provided a brief history of the optimization process and current optimization efforts as endorsed by the City Council in the FY 05 Adopted Budget and Updated Three-Year Financial Strategic Plan. These efforts include:

- 1) Continued collaborative discussions with the LBUSD that led to a review of 100 percent of crossing guard staffing assignments based on each school's actual schedule and need for the current year;
- 2) Convening of an employee optimization team consisting of 13 crossing guards to develop recommendations for making the program more efficient and effective; and
- 3) Collaboration between PSAC, the Department of Public Works and the Police Department to re-evaluate up to 20 percent of current crossing locations this year to determine if they still meet the criteria of Section 10.68 of the Long Beach Municipal Code for a staffed location.

The update also addressed several questions raised at the October 19, 2004 City Council meeting on issues such as assigning locations, staffing, changes in schedules and hours, injuries, and "meet and confer" requirements. Finally, the update of December 9, 2004 also noted that the City Manager would develop a report on ideas generated from all the different stakeholders and would provide the report to the Mayor and City Council.

As listed above, the first optimization effort included collaborative discussions between City Manager staff, the Police Department, the Department of Public Works and LBUSD on several key issues. These issues include the projected need for busing, the projected demand for elementary schools, the potential use of volunteer guards at specific sites that do not meet the criteria for a City crossing guard, and specific staffing hours needed for each location. These discussions also led City staff to work with LBUSD to contact every elementary school and adjust crossing guard hours for each location based on each school's actual schedule and need for the current year. This effort resulted in a review of 100 percent of the staffing assignments of all crossing guard locations and a projected savings of \$60,500.

The second optimization effort, led by an employee optimization team, concluded on February 17, 2005 and resulted in the School Crossing Guard Optimization Team Recommendations Report (Attachment C). This report is the product of 15 meetings held by 13 crossing guards over a period of five months. Since the program budget of \$1.4 million was primarily personnel costs and the non-personnel budget was only \$1,670, the team found it very difficult to develop recommendations for cost savings. The recommendations the team did develop focused on improvements in communication between the crossing guards and Police Department supervisors, coordination of bus and location schedules, coordination of locations when construction occurs or traffic signals become inoperable, training and improving employee morale.

As noted in the Management Response of Attachment C, the Police Department supports the majority of the recommendations presented by the optimization team and noted that some of the recommendations have been in place for some time. As a result, the department acknowledges that increased education and communication is necessary to keep the crossing guards better informed.

City Manager staff has reviewed the report recommendations and the response from the Police Department, and supports implementing those recommendations that improve communication and employee morale. Recommendations that increase costs will be evaluated as part of the department's FY 2006 proposed budget.

The third optimization effort, as recommended in the May 3, 2004 memorandum to the Mayor and City Council, involves the development of a Bi-Annual Crossing Guard Deployment Plan that updates the "Suggested Routes to School" plan and continues to explore opportunities to improve crossing locations by increasing pedestrian safety.

The Plan also calls for a re-evaluation of 25 percent of approved crossing locations every two years to ensure appropriate allocation of resources. This re-evaluation enables the redeployment or elimination of crossing locations that no longer meet the Municipal Code criteria.

The Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee, at the time of the May 3, 2004 recommendations, had already conducted a limited number of re-evaluations and had taken action to deem five locations as no longer meeting the Municipal Code criteria. According to the April 5, 2005 recommendations from the Chairperson of PSAC (Attachment D), these five locations no longer require the assignment of a crossing guard.

In addition, the City Traffic Engineer, in response to the recommendation to re-evaluate 25 percent of approved crossing locations over a two-year period, and with the collaboration of the Police Department and LBUUSD, identified 13 crossing locations to be re-evaluated during the current school year. The list of 13 locations either had significant traffic control changes or did not have a current study on file with the City Traffic Engineer.

With PSAC's direction to move forward with a re-evaluation, the City Traffic Engineer conducted the 13 new studies. Based on careful consideration of each location, and taking into account re-evaluation study results, accident rates, traffic safety enhancements and personal knowledge of the area, the Committee deemed that six locations continue to meet the requirements of the Long Beach Municipal Code while voting unanimously that seven locations no longer met the requirements.

Based on the recommendations from PSAC, City staff recommends that 12 locations (the first five prior locations, plus the seven recently evaluated locations) be considered by the City Council as no longer meeting the requirements of the Long Beach Municipal Code. As a result, staffing for these locations would cease by the end of this school year (see Attachment D for location details). Each impacted school will be given the option of

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

May 10, 2005

Page 4

developing a volunteer program with training provided by the Long Beach Police Department, as required by State law.

City staff also recommends that an annual evaluation occur of up to 15 percent of the locations and that recommendations to add, eliminate or re-assign locations be brought to the City Council for consideration.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Lisa P. Malmsten on May 2, 2005 and by Assistant City Auditor J.C. Squires on May 3, 2005.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

City Council authorization to deem that 12 school crossing locations no longer meet the requirements of Section 10.68 of the Long Beach Municipal Code is requested at the May 10, 2005 meeting to ensure that parent notifications can occur before the end of this school year.

FISCAL IMPACT

Elimination of the 12 locations that no longer meet the Municipal Code criteria will result in an estimated savings of \$137,900. The total amount, combined with the savings from the earlier review of hours at each location, equals \$198,400 in projected annual savings. These savings are in accordance with the Three-Year Financial Strategic Plan's target savings for FY 05.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,



GERALD R. MILLER
CITY MANAGER

DCG:CFS: pc
C:\May 10 2005 Crossing Guard Council Letter

Attachments:

Attachment A: May 3, 2004 Memo on Management Review of the Crossing Guard Program

Attachment B: December 9, 2004 Memo on Crossing Guard Program Update

Attachment C: February 17, 2005 School Crossing Guard Optimization Team Report

Attachment D: April 5, 2005 Recommendations from the Public Safety Advisory Committee