Legislation Text

File #: 22-0473, **Version:** 1

Recommendation to increase appropriations in the General Fund Group in the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department by $15,000, offset by the Sixth Council District One-Time District Priority Funds transferred from the Citywide Activities Department to support the Long Beach Cambodian Cultural Center feasible study; and

Decrease appropriations in the General Fund Group in the Citywide Activities Department by $15,000 to offset a transfer to the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department.

Long Beach is a diverse and dynamic city, and it is widely recognized for celebrating the diversity of our population, and for embracing and advancing the arts. The City is home to the Museum of Latin American Art, the Pacific Island Ethnic Art Museum, the Homeland Cultural Center and the Long Beach Japanese Cultural Center, among many local cultural institutions.

Long Beach is home to the largest Cambodian population in the United States. The Cambodian or the Khmer people have a long and rich cultural heritage symbolized by the temple city Angkor Wat, considered one of the Wonders of the Ancient World, built between the 9th and 12th centuries, stands as a living icon of the endurance and genius of all Cambodians throughout the world.

Early connections between the United States and Cambodia began in the 1950s, when Cambodia sent bright and talented college students to universities, including California State Universities in Long Beach and Los Angeles, to study technical trades, engineering, and agriculture with the assistance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

On April 17, 1975, the lives of Cambodians were forever changed when the Khmer Rouge marched into Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, and evacuated the entire city as they forced people into labor camps and executed former government officials, doctors, artists, scholars, among others. It became known as Year Zero as it was marked by the Khmer Rouge regime. Under that regime, it has been estimated that over 2 million lives were lost due to execution and starvation. Tens of thousands were made widows and orphans, and those who lived through the regime were severely traumatized by their experiences. Several hundred thousand Cambodians fled their country and became refugees, resettling in countries across the world to rebuild their lives.

After the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, over 140,000 Cambodians came to the United States as refugees, making the City of Long Beach home to the largest Cambodian population in the United States.

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The Cambodian genocide was a human tragedy. Cambodian art and culture were nearly lost forever during the Khmer Rouge period. Therefore, it is imperative to have a Cambodian Cultural Center that not only promote but also preserve Cambodian art, culture, and history.

In the ongoing tradition in Long Beach of celebrating the diverse cultures and helping to tell their stories, we request a funds transfer to the City Manager to support the Cambodian American Cultural Center feasibility study which can serve as a home to promote, preserve and celebrate Cambodian art, culture, and history.

This matter was reviewed by Budget Manager Grace H. Yoon on April 21, 2022.

This recommendation requests a funds transfer to the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department to support the Cambodian American Cultural Center feasibility study. The total appropriation increase of $15,000 in the General Fund Group in the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department will be offset by a decrease of appropriation of the Sixth Council District One-time District Priority Funds in the General Fund Group in the Citywide Activities Department. The recommendation is anticipated to require a minimal level of staff hours beyond the budgeted scope of duties and is expected to have minimal impact on existing City Council priorities.

Approve recommendation.

SUELY SARO COUNCILWOMAN,
SIXTH DISTRICT

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