

City Council Citizen Development
and Enrichment Committee
City Council Chambers
Torrance, California

Members of the Committee:

SUBJECT: Community Services – Senior Citizen Excursion Program

BACKGROUND

At the May 8, 2012 Budget Hearing, the City Council was approached by several concerned citizens regarding the increase in the fees to the Senior Citizen Excursion Program. At this meeting, staff were requested to provide an overview of the Senior Citizen Excursion Program at the next Budget Hearing.

At the May 15, 2012 Budget Hearing, staff provided an overview of the Senior Citizen Excursion Program, which included a history of this program and how the excursion fees were set in the past. Staff also provided information on how the implementation of the new Cost Recovery/Subsidy Plan had impacted the registration levels for these senior excursions. In the item, staff provided a few options for the City Council to consider in order to make the excursions more affordable. The City Manager provided a note in the item that suggested that this issue be addressed by your Honorable Body, in an effort to explore additional options that would benefit those seniors who are most in need (Attachment A).

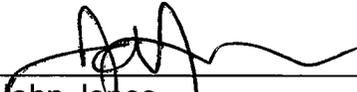
ANALYSIS

In reviewing this issue, staff believe that further information is required in order to accomplish the goal of the City Manager. In order to identify our seniors who are most in need, and to gain a better insight as to the validity of the excursion program, staff recommend that additional information be gathered from the Senior Excursion Program participants. As there are approximately 400 senior citizens on the *Torrance Travelers* roster, staff suggest the development of a user survey that could be sent to each participant soliciting their demographic information and household income information, identifying their frequency of use, and determining the reason(s) for their participation in our Senior Citizen Excursion Program. Staff believe that the survey should be name optional, due to the fact that senior citizens are a very proud and private population.

This survey can be developed quickly and mailed to participants by the end of August in order to expedite this fact finding process. Staff anticipate that the information gathered

from this survey can be analyzed and brought back to your Honorable Body by the end of September. In addition to the findings from the survey, staff continue to explore with the Finance Department the potential of purchasing discounted Proposition A Transportation Funds that other municipal agencies have used to offset the bus transportation cost for their senior excursion programs. Lastly, staff have provided copies of input garnered through phone calls, letters, and emails received to date from participants of the *Torrance Travelers Program* (Attachment B).

Respectfully submitted,



John Jones
Community Services Director

CONCUR:



LeRoy J. Jackson
City Manager

Attachment:

- A. May 15, 2012 Budget Hearing – Senior Citizen Excursion Program
- B. Record of phone calls, letters, and emails received from participants on the *Torrance Travelers Program*

CITY OF TORRANCE

INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION

DATE: May 11, 2012

TO: Eric Tsao, Finance Director

FROM: John Jones, Community Services Director

SUBJECT: SENIOR CITIZENS EXCURSION PROGRAM

The Community Services Department has offered a Senior Citizens Excursion program for the past 37 years. Excursion fees were set to cover the direct costs for the individual excursions. The Senior Excursion Program provides a wonderful opportunity for seniors to experience new places, make new friends, and stimulate their minds.

For many years, the Excursion Program (then called the *Young Seniors Association Tours*) was very successful. However, in the early 2000's, it began to be more difficult to fill trips. Staff saw it necessary to complete an analysis of the program to determine whether or not the program goals and individual excursions were still relevant to the senior citizen population. Staff completed participant and non-participant surveys, meetings with tour industry experts, and discussions with other agencies and organizations, to redefine goals for the program. Staff then incorporated changes to the program including new tour escorts, registration procedures, and marketing strategies and re-launched the program in April 2009.

Initial returns on the program were high, as the program thrived from April 2009 through December 2011 with only one cancelled trip in 33 months). In most cases the trips were filled to capacity and included waiting lists.

In February 2012, staff implemented the new Cost Recovery/Subsidy Plan that included the Indirect Cost for the Senior Excursion program. This increased the fees for each excursion which immediately impacted registration totals. Since the additional fees were added four of the five trips were cancelled. Many of the seniors felt that the value of the excursion didn't match the increased fee that was being charged.

Prior to the indirect costs being added to the fee, the program fees included the following:

- Fee to Main Street Tours (includes admission to venue, transportation, as well as lodging and some meals on overnight tours)
- Tour escort salaries (Two Recurrent staff)
- Planning and preparation (Recurrent staff)
- Snacks for bus ride

At the present time, the cost breakdown for a day trip ticket includes:

Fee to Main Street Tours (admission and transportation)	\$68
Tour chaperon salary (One Recurrent staff)	\$5
Planning and preparation (Recurrent staff)	\$4
Snacks for bus ride	\$1
Current Direct Cost Per Participant	\$78
Indirect Rate for the Excursion Program	\$43
Total Cost Per Participant	\$121
Less City Subsidy (20%)	(\$24)
Ticket Price Per Participant	\$97

As staff have received complaints regarding the increased fees, staff have explored two options to make the trips more affordable.

1. Increase the Subsidy: The current subsidy level for the Excursion Program is 20%. Increasing the subsidy level to 40% would reduce the ticket price of the trip an additional \$24 to approximately \$73. Additional subsidy in the amount of \$41,000 would have to be added from the General Fund, or other programs within the Division would have to bear the additional cost.

2. Restructure the Department's Scholarship Program: The Department has a scholarship program designed to provide recreational and cultural opportunities to low income families, including senior citizens. The current program as approved by Council does not allow scholarships to be used for Excursions. With modification to the program, and additional scholarship funding of \$15,000, the scholarship program can be expanded to cover excursions. Participants would be required to meet low income criteria as established in the current scholarship program.

City Manager Note:

While the Community Services Director has explored two additional options, the City Manager would recommend referring this to the Citizens Development and Enrichment Committee. The Committee would be tasked with the goal of exploring additional options that would benefit those seniors who are most in need. Funding options would be addressed at that time.

Comments from seniors re: *Torrance Travelers* (telephone calls) ---

After 1st letter from John was sent ---

1/10/12 Beverly Sherman 310 782-9214

She is a resident of Carson and loves going on our tours, but has not traveled with us since we added the \$20 non-resident fee. She thinks this makes the fees way too high and we should be happy to have non-residents in our program. She also travels with the YMCA, Torrance Adult School and the City of Carson --- all are cheaper and do not charge extra for non-residents.

1/11/12 Female caller --- declined to leave name or phone number

She is very upset that the fees have been raised for our trips and thinks we should be more sensitive to the seniors. She will think about whether she wants to call back with any additional comments and/or leave her name.

After 2nd letter from John was sent ---

6/25/12 Beverly Sherman 310 782-9214

Once again, Ms. Sherman indicated her unhappiness with the non-resident fee. I explained the new fee structure, which will actually lower the non-resident surcharge. She was happy to hear that adjustments had been made.

6/25/12 Gerry Pupa 310 318-7101

Mr. Pupa indicated that he is very happy with the quality of our trips and finds them affordable and well-run.

6/25/12 Christian Frank (did not leave a phone number)

Thinks that tours are very well coordinated and believes prices are ok. Went on Las Vegas trip and thought it was great.

7/19/12 Arnold Katz 310 316-2478

Would like the tour program to continue, but be much more subsidized. Prices are too high. Perhaps to lower the cost, we could use only volunteers to run the program, like the YMCA does. Would like to see more "Indian Casino" trips.

7/20/12 Margaret (did not leave last name) 310 814-2812

She is a non-resident and would like to see the program continue. She cannot usually make it to the registration date as she still works on weekdays, but hopes to be able to get on trips by calling the tour line after the initial registration date. She thinks all of our tours sound very interesting.

June 22, 2012



**Torrance City Hall
3031 Torrance Blvd.,
Torrance, CA 90503**

**Attn: John Jones
Community Services Director
and
Suzie Wand,
Senior Recreation Supervisor**

Dear Mr. Jones:

I received your letter and wanted to reply regarding Torrance Travelers program. In the past few years, I have taken a couple of the day tours, but have always thought they were particularly high priced in comparison to tours offered by our church and by the Red Hat Society that I belong to.

These tours keep prices lower by using the Free Bus service offered by (can't remember his name, but he has an office at City Hall) Non-profits are allowed to use these Free Buses a certain number of times each year.

I'm sure you are aware of this service, and was wondering if the Torrance Travelers program used these Free Buses to keep prices down for Senior Tours.

Thank you for working with the City Council Citizen Development and Enrichment Committee to make day-tours affordable for Torrance Seniors who are usually on fixed incomes at this time in their life after contributing to Torrance for so many of their working years, and continuing to pay property and all kinds of other taxes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marianne Welsh". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

**Marianne Welsh
3407 Emerald Street
Torrance, CA 90503
mwelsh2@socal.rr.com**

Jan 7, 2012

Dear John Jones,

In answer to your letter, the reason why I no longer participate in Lorraine Travelers is as follows,

When we bought our home here, it was after almost a year of looking in the beach communities, Lorraine, El Segundo, Lomita, etc, for a desirable house that was also within our ability to pay. Our present address fitted the bill completely.

Now, just because we could not find a house in Lorraine, we are charged \$20 more for local trips.

It costs no more for the bus and driver or any other expense to transport those members living out of Lorraine more than the locals, so why discriminate?

If you find some other, more equitable way of meeting expenses, you may see us again. I hope so.

Sincerely

Jean McDaniel

Wand, Suzanne

From: Henk Steenman [loscodona5@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Monday, January 23, 2012 1:41 PM
To: Wand, Suzanne
Subject: Torrance Travellers

January 23, 2012

Dear Susie:

Thanks for the invitation to participate in the upcoming "Torrance Travellers" events.

Since Chinese art is not high on our list of interests we decided to skip the 2/29 trip. And we'll be out of town at the end of March and will therefore not participate in the 3/28 excursion.

Normally we would just not have shown up to register. But in view of the letter we received from John Jones (dated 12/15/2011) we wanted to let you know that our absence on these two trips does not mean the end of a long and beautiful relationship.

We hope that both trips will be fully subscribed and we look forward to participate in future events.

Greetings to you and all your co-workers!

Joyce Hughes & Henk Steenman