

REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council
From the City Manager

May 22, 2006

Subject

The Human Resources Department is requesting additional funding for the design and delivery of citywide customer service training.

Recommendation

Approve resolution amending HR budget to provide funds in the amount of \$14,840 to the Human Resources Department to provide customer service training to customer-facing employees in the spring and summer of 2006. These funds will cover three distinct modules of customer service training: 1) Train the trainer module so staff can deliver the training in the future; 2) Supervisor workshop to give managers the skills to motivate and empower customer facing employees; 3) Two half-day sessions of customer service training for customer-facing employees.

Background

The Human Resources Department is requesting additional funding of \$14,840 for the design and delivery of customer service training workshops. Two half-day sessions – five weeks apart – for customer-facing Redwood City employees would be offered and would provide them creative problem-solving techniques to utilize when dealing with difficult customer situations. Topics covered in the first employee session would include collaborating with customers, choosing to give an empathic response, and using sound listening skills. The second employee session would cover educating customers, maintaining positive customer relations even when unable do what your customer asks, providing service consistent with our values and handling conflict. A six-hour supervisor workshop would be geared toward providing managers with techniques for motivating and empowering employees to provide collaborative service and skills in coaching their employees on customer service.

The final workshop would be an eight-hour Train-the-Trainer session, where a cross section of employees from all departments would become certified to deliver the supervisor and employee sessions described above. This Train-the-Trainer session would develop internal capacity to continue to offer the customer service training on an ongoing basis. Moreover, creating a cadre of certified internal trainers would permit the City to make this expenditure of \$14,840 a one-time-only outlay. This low fee is made possible because our Employee Development Manager will work collaboratively with the reasonably-priced

external consultant identified below to create an engaging and effective customer service program customized to our needs.

These workshops would support Redwood City's core purpose of building a great community together by enhancing participants' skills in providing excellent service with integrity and creativity. The training would be focused on ensuring that employees' customer service interactions are aligned with the City's values. In addition, they would establish and communicate consistent customer service standards and practices across city departments that have the highest volume of public interaction with our citizens.

Additional funding is requested because customer service training was not included in the FY05-06 employee development budget. Council has expressed an interest in conducting customer service training in this fiscal year. Therefore, staff is requesting additional training funds to conduct such training. The Human Resources department did examine its overall budget to determine whether it could absorb this program, but funding was unavailable.


Human Resources staff will work with an outside consultant to design, deliver and evaluate this training. After seeking referrals from several comparable agencies and local governments, staff has identified consultant, Kenda Swartz of the Professional & Workforce Development division of De Anza College in Cupertino to work on this project. Ms. Swartz has nearly 16 years human relations experience, which includes general business consulting, employee training and development, management and counseling. She completed her BA in Liberal Arts with an emphasis on Organizational Communication and Public Relations from Penn State University and earned her MA in Art Therapy Psychology from the College of Notre Dame.

Alternative

The alternative would be to not conduct this training at this time.

Fiscal Impact

The program cost of \$14,840 represents a very competitive and reasonable fee for services of this type.



Sophie Oberstein
Employee Development Manager



Bob Bell
HR Director



Ed Everett
City Manager

Attachment:
Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION AMENDING FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006 HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT BUDGET

WHEREAS, the City Council of Redwood City adopted Ordinance No. 2286 approving its Fiscal Year 2005-2006 budget; and

WHEREAS, the Human Resources Department is requesting additional funding in the amount of Fourteen Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty Dollars (\$14,840.00) for customer services training as said services was not included in its FY 2005-2006 budget proposal; and

WHEREAS, if the requested additional funding for customer service training is provided, two half day sessions – five weeks apart – for customer – facing Redwood City employees would be offered and would provide said employees with creative problem solving techniques to utilize when dealing with difficult situations; and

WHEREAS, additional funding in the total amount of \$14,840.00 from general fund resources held in reserve are necessary to provide the above-described services.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF REDWOOD CITY AS FOLLOWS:

1. The following stated amounts are hereby appropriated or transferred from the general fund resources held in reserve and are appropriated or transferred as follows:

| <u>Amount</u> | <u>Account Number</u> |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| \$14,840.00 | 150-61610-55 |

2. The foregoing sums appropriated and transferred for the purposes hereinable specified are effective upon adoption of this resolution, and shall be in addition to all other sums appropriated or transferred for such purposes during the fiscal year.

* * *