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LOCAL NEWS

Cloverdale approves Spanish interpretation services at City Council meetings

The Cloverdale City Council voted unanimously during its regular meeting Oct. 28, 2026, to provide Spanish-language interpretation services at City Council meetings for the city's monolingual Spanish-speaking residents (City of Cloverdale).

By ANNA ARMSTRONG | anna.armstrong@pressdemocrat.com | The Press Democrat
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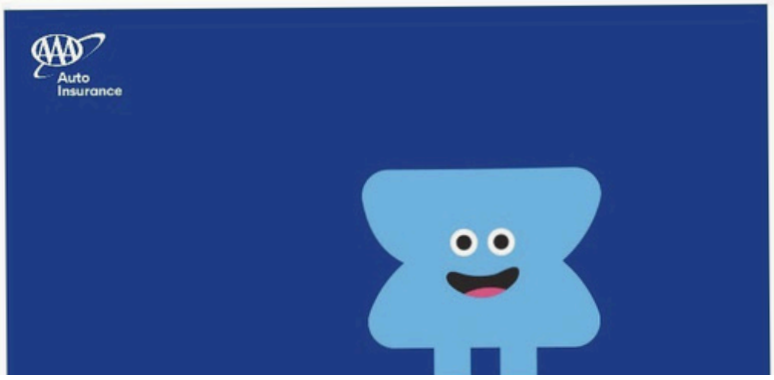
Spanish-speaking residents in Sonoma County's northernmost city will soon be able to more fully participate in local government after the Cloverdale City Council endorsed having interpretation services at its meetings.

The services will begin in January after the council on Oct. 28 voted 4-0 in support of a one-year contract with interpreter Manual Gonzalez, who will provide in-person, live Spanish-language interpretation at council meetings.

"I am very happy to see this," said Councilmember Andrés Marquez, who has helped spearhead the effort. He noted many of the Latino and Hispanic residents who make up roughly 40% of Cloverdale's population are monolingual.

Under the agreement, spending on interpretation services is capped at $12,300. The Healthcare Foundation Northern Sonoma County, which works to address health inequities in the region, has committed to covering half those costs.



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The group, known as the Equity Community Organizing, or ECO, group meets monthly at the offices of nonprofit social service agency La Familia Sana and members have identified issues ranging from transportation to language access at City Council meetings, she said.

Working alongside La Familia Sana and On The Margins, another community organization, the Healthcare Foundation helped the senior group organize a presentation to the City Council advocating for interpretation services.

The lack of such services, Ramirez said, has historically prevented residents who don't speak English from fully participating in decisions affecting their communities.

Ramirez said it took nearly two years for group members to feel comfortable enough to bring their concerns to the council. During a presentation this summer, two seniors shared testimony about the importance of the group's work and the need for language access.

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"I think it was really empowering to this group to get to a place where they felt comfortable going to that meeting and advocating for themselves," Ramirez told The Press Democrat.

The City Council considered proposals from Gonzalez and Samara Interpreter, ultimately selecting Gonzalez, who is based closer to Cloverdale.

"I think it is a great idea," Councilmember Marjorie Morgenstern said. "We currently have 40% of our population that is underrepresented. The more people that participate in this city, the better."

Ramirez said the new service will allow Spanish-speaking residents to follow council discussions, make public comments and advocate for issues that matter to them. She hopes the change will encourage greater civic engagement, particularly among older Latino residents who have lived in Cloverdale for years but have faced barriers to participating in local government, she said.

"Participating in local government, in civic engagement at City Council meetings is such an accessible resource the community has but it hasn't been for our Spanish-speaking population," Ramirez said.

"This means a lot to them. It means that they feel truly like part of the decision-making community," she said."

You can reach Staff Writer Anna Armstrong at 707-521-5254 or at anna.armstrong@pressdemocrat.com. On X (Twitter) @annavarmstrongg.

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