



Local News

Lewisville debates making English official language

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The Lewisville City Council is expected to debate English as the city's official language, as well as which documents to translate into Spanish or other languages.

The council discussed translating documents in August but decided to postpone a decision until October. The council will reconsider the document matter Monday, as well as an official language resolution.

Carrollton officials recently considered a similar resolution but decided instead to form a residents panel to develop a recommendation on that and other issues related to illegal immigration.

So far in North Texas, only Farmers Branch and the small Denton County town of Oak Point have adopted English language resolutions.

Lewisville council members disagreed earlier on translating documents.

Council member Lathan Watts said he raised the subject to provide "direction to staff."

"Certain documents are required by state and federal law to be translated," he said. "But the question is what we should do beyond that.

"There are multiple languages spoken in Lewisville," he said. "Should we translate documents into all those languages or just Spanish?"

Mr. Watts asked that Monday's agenda also include consideration of a resolution declaring English the city's official language.

"This gives us a chance to consider all our options," he said.

Council member Rudy Durham opposes the resolution. "It is discriminatory and follows what Farmers Branch and Irving are trying to do to drive illegal immigrants away," he said.

Mr. Durham also said translating documents, particularly those that have a "health and public safety concern," is an important customer service that benefits many residents.

City officials have translated about a dozen documents into Spanish beyond those required by law. Spanish is the primary language in about 20 percent of Lewisville's 30,000 households, according to city spokesman James Kunke.

At the August meeting, two residents identifying themselves as Hispanic said they oppose document translation.

One of them, John Gorena, also said he supports the resolution and encourages other supporters to attend Monday's meeting.

"I want to see English declared as the official language for doing business in Lewisville," said Mr. Gorena, a bilingual businessman who ran unsuccessfully for the council in May. "If you spend money and time on translating documents into Spanish, then you should translate them into Korean, German, Chinese and every other language spoken in Lewisville to be fair.

"That gets to be ridiculous, and it divides the community rather than brings people together in one common language," he said.

Monday's regular council session begins at 7 p.m.