



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Toni Taber, CMC

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: August 6, 2020

SUPPLEMENTAL

On June 24, 2020, Councilmember Peralez made several proposals to improve the public engagement process in City Council, Council Committee and other City Public Meetings. The Office of the City Clerk welcomes suggestions for improving public engagement in the City Council process, and began implementing many of the recommendations prior to this meeting. In addition to Councilmember Peralez's suggestions, the Office of the City Clerk also listened to suggestions from the public to make the links to the meeting more clear. The agenda template is being revised by the software vendor to include more information on the cover page, and the calendar view of upcoming meetings now includes the zoom links in the "location" section, so the public can use the link without opening the agenda.

Staff would like to provide context and vocabulary for the discussion of enhancing Zoom and other broadcast platforms. The Zoom Webinar is an internet teleconference utilized in lieu of in-person meetings. The City Manager's Communications Office is broadcasting the Zoom Webinar live to Cable TV, YouTube and the Granicus streaming platform. The broadcast platforms are enhanced with closed captions and graphics that highlight the current agenda item and identify speakers. Broadcasts are archived and made available on-demand via YouTube and Granicus with closed captions and agenda links.

The responses to Councilmember Peralez's suggestions are as follows:

1. Visually display the agenda item number and title on Zoom or any other platforms that host public meetings and remain visible until the item is finalized.

The current virtual meeting platform in use does not allow us to add an editable title bar at this time. The timer screen has been modified during public speakers to include the item number and title.

The current virtual meeting platform we are using was not developed specifically for City Council meetings, but has been serviceable. Since the COVID-19 pandemic sent many cities into the virtual meeting landscape, several government specific solutions have become available or have been moved to the top of the public agency software vendors' priorities to improve

existing solutions. The Office of the City Clerk has worked with the Public Works AV team who support in person City Council meetings to schedule a demonstration with one vendor for Monday, August 10, and additional vendors have been contacted to see if their solutions would be as user friendly as the current software solution, and to make a more accessible meeting.

2. The Meeting Chair to verbally announce the agenda item name and number during the following times:

- a. At the start, prior to discussion on any item*
- b. Before starting public comment*

Virtual Meeting guidelines are drafted and will be provided to City Councilmembers as well as commission secretaries. A draft of the guidelines is attached.

3. Provide visual directions regarding access to closed captions on Zoom and other platforms that host the City of San José's public meetings.

Currently, captioning is available on the YouTube, cable and website broadcasts. Directions have been added to the interpretation notice displayed at the City Council meeting via Zoom. Broadcast captions are provided by through CivicCenter TV. Closed Captioning services can be provided within the Zoom platform similar to the interpretation services at a cost of \$85/hour. The Closed Captioning services would be used similar to the interpretation service currently utilized for Spanish and Vietnamese. A nine-hour meeting would then cost \$765.

4. After the vote on an agenda item, visually display on Zoom and other platforms that host San José's public meetings a statement of the final motion (with amendments) and the voting results.

This has been put into practice at the July 28 and August 3 City Council meetings. Motions which consist of approval of staff recommendation only are displayed as a notation on the voting spreadsheet, such as "Approved." Motions which include more complicated directions have been displayed in the July 28 and August 3 City Council meetings. The voting spreadsheet automatically totals the line to show how many "yes" and "no" votes are made as they are being recorded.

5. Use best practices for translation services and analyze existing effective solutions to do the following:

- a. A statement regarding translation services will be made before each item on Zoom and other platforms that host San José's public meetings*
- b. Visually display a statement in English, Spanish and Vietnamese on Zoom and other platforms that host San José's public meetings and explore a Spanish and Vietnamese translation option as part of their broadcast and as standard practice.*
- c. Meeting agendas and packet information should be translated as a standard practice.*

A notice, attached, is displayed before the meeting and during breaks. For July 28th and August 3rd City Council meetings, Spanish and Vietnamese interpreters have been present. One of the drawbacks to Zoom has been that the platform offers a non-editable selection of nine foreign

languages which does not yet include Vietnamese. The City Clerk's office and the Information Technology department contacted Zoom in July regarding this issue. As a result, the next update of Zoom will include the ability to enter in a user-defined language. This update is due to come out within the next two weeks.

Neither YouTube nor Granicus, which provides the webstream on the City website, support simultaneous foreign language audio tracks within a broadcast. The cable television broadcast on Comcast can support only one additional audio track with its current cable set top box equipment deployed in greater San Jose. This kind of simultaneous audio is called SAP, Second Audio Portion, and City Staff has reached out to Comcast to enquire about the possibility of San Jose CivicCenter TV being simulcast with SAP. The capabilities of existing equipment and cost of potential necessary upgrades on both the San Jose CivicCenter TV and Comcast portion have not yet been determined. If the equipment capabilities and funding could be resolved, CCTV could still only support one language besides English, so it would have to determined what language would occupy the SAP.

There is a significant cost that is not in the current budget for providing interpretation and translation services. For interpretation during meetings, the invoice for a nine-hour meeting with both Spanish and Vietnamese interpreters was \$4,386. The City is invoiced for the amount of time booked, so if the meeting is anticipated to last 10 hours, but ends at eight hours, we are charged for the full estimated meeting time. For in person meetings, there is an additional cost of interpreting equipment that is not included in this estimate. To have interpretation at every Council meeting, we estimate an annual cost of approximately \$180,600.

The lowest estimated cost of translating the Agenda sans memos and attachments is about \$4,000 per meeting for both Spanish and Vietnamese with a 6-10 day lead time. Therefore, under our current ten day posting, we would possibly have a translated agenda a few days before the meeting, but possibly not until the day of the meeting. The Amended Agenda, which posts five days before the meeting, may not be translated in time. Annually, the estimated cost would be \$168,000 for the City Council agenda sans memos and attachments.

The estimated cost of translating the June 23 Agenda packet at 293,660 words is \$44,049 for Spanish and \$79,288 for Vietnamese for a total of \$123,337 for one meeting. Should we have 40 meetings with packets of that size, the cost is about \$5 million per year (\$4,933,488). There are some meetings with smaller packets and some with larger. Should the Council want to budget for full translation of the agenda with memos and attachments, the cost should be at the full \$5 million per year.

In addition to cost, the turnaround time for an agenda packet is 10-12 days or longer depending on the length of the agenda packet. Our current posting deadline is ten days prior to the meeting, with amendments posted the Friday before. Memos and supplemental may come in on the day of the meeting; therefore, the timing for a full agenda packet translation may not work.

The cost for automated translations is approximately \$.10/word which is a significant savings from a certified translator; however, automated translation would not be recommended based on

the technical terms used in staff reports, attachments, and on the agenda. Automated translations should be reviewed by an employee or outside service for accuracy in translation which would add to the cost in staff hours for internal staff, or additional fees for an outside service.

6. Participants shall be given full opportunity to make public comment, taking into account virtual latency time.. The Meeting Chair shall provide adequate time (e.g. 30 seconds) after naming the person who appears to be the last in the speaker queue before proceeding to the debate of the body.

The Virtual Meeting Guidelines, draft attached, include direction to the Chair for an announcement to be made prior to the last speaker.

7. Issues regarding housing and COVID policies should be agendized for evening council sessions to ensure more essential workers and families can participate.

The Rules and Open Government Committee (ROGC) and City Staff can make these recommendations at the ROGC meeting at which the Council meeting is heard.

COST IMPLICATIONS

The Council General budget appropriation is \$63,000 for FY20-21 and is used for supplies, meals for late meetings, translations, and interpreting services. When the budget is exceeded, the funds come from the Office of the City Clerk budget. Under the current estimates, the Council General budget can accommodate approximately 14 meetings with Spanish and Vietnamese interpretation only and without translating meeting materials. Of those 14 meetings, three have occurred (July 28, August 3, and August 11). Should captioning of the Zoom broadcast be included, the cost increases reduce the number of meetings to approximately 11 meetings.

Costs of interpretation and translation have been estimated only for City Council Meetings. The cost would increase if Council Committee, Commission meetings, and all other public meetings are also using interpretation and translation services.

Should the Council direct staff to regularly include interpretation for City Council meetings in lieu of the current practice of only hiring interpreters upon request, a budget adjustment will be required for the Council General budget to cover the increased costs. Should the City Council direct translations of meeting materials, there would need to be action to appropriate funds for translations due to the significant cost which cannot be absorbed by the current Council Appropriation or the current Office of the City Clerk appropriation.

This memo was coordinated with the City Manager's Office with thanks to Craig Jutson for providing detailed information regarding captioning and foreign language capabilities of the broadcasts outside of Zoom.



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VIRTUAL MEETING GUIDELINES

- 1) Call the meeting to order. Ask for Roll Call, or announce verbally who is in attendance and who is absent.
- 2) Announce name and number of each item as you come to it. Announce the following: “If you are watching YouTube or cable TV, and wish to comment on this item, please go over to the meeting on Zoom for public comment. The link can be found on the agenda.” This will allow people to move from YouTube to Zoom while the presentations are being done and they will be in Zoom in time to raise their hand.
- 3) When you call for public comment, repeat the name and number of the item so the public is aware what item you are on. Say “If you wish to speak on item _____, please press *9 if you are on the phone, or click “Raise hand” in the Zoom application.”
- 4) Call the speaker by name. Allow staff to click “allow to speak” and start the timer (and share the time). This may take a few seconds. The timer should not start until the speaker begins speaking.
- 5) Before the last speaker, please announce “the last speaker is _____. If anyone else wishes to speak, please press *9 now if you are on the phone or click “raise hand” in the Zoom application.”
- 6) For City Council meetings, the vote should be displayed as it’s taken. Complicated motions should be displayed to make sure people know what is being voted on.

These Guidelines are expected to be updated with best practices as we learn more and software gets updated. Please let me know of additional practices to add to these guidelines.