



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: COUNCILMEMBER PERALEZ

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: June 18, 2020

Approved by:

Date: 6/18/2020

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS IN CITY COUNCIL, COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND OTHER CITY PUBLIC MEETINGS

RECOMMENDATION:

Direct the City Manager to report back to the Mayor and Council with recommendations on how to implement the following::

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.
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
3. Provide visual directions regarding access to closed captions on Zoom and other platforms that host the City of San José's public meetings.
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..
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.
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.
 7. Issues regarding housing and COVID policies should be agendaized for evening council sessions to ensure more essential workers and families can participate.

BACKGROUND

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, our city had to quickly shift our public meeting process, including how we engage our public during this time. In this time when so many seek to have their voices heard, the City of San José must strengthen communication strategies to ensure all residents have the opportunity to engage in virtual meetings of the City Council and its committees. Improvements are needed to enhance the audio and visual accessibility of public meetings through more culturally competent and consistent efforts. According to the San José Digital Inclusion Program¹, 95K of our residents lack internet access and 55% of our low income residents have no access to the internet. The digital divide should give us pause and ensure our methods are not exacerbating these barriers further. We should work towards digital inclusion by increasing participation for those who lack access to technology and need user support within our public process.

I believe the residents of San José and our city administration share the goal of having equitable access to the public process. Improved changes to the current process should be reviewed by the City Clerk and City Attorney with recommendations for improvement to be implemented no later than the first committee and Council meeting in August 2020. Finally, this pivot in the way we conduct our meetings is an opportunity for us to integrate these virtual improvements in the event when in-person meetings resume, allowing for us to continue to broaden participation in our civic process.

¹ <https://www.sjdigitalinclusion.org/>