

Memorandum



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Toni J. Taber, CMC
City Clerk

SUBJECT: HYBRID MEETINGS

DATE: June 24, 2021

RECOMMENDATION

Approve transition plan for Hybrid meetings:

- (1) Approve August 3, 2021 as the first public City Council meeting held in the hybrid environment
- (2) Approve Council Committees remaining fully virtual in August 2021, and if possible resume these meetings as soon as September 2021 to the hybrid model in the Council Chambers space with adequate staffing and technology
- (3) Approve Boards and Commissions remaining fully virtual until October 2021 after which they will return to fully in person per the Governor's Executive Orders on the Brown Act, and approve Boards and Commissions move to the hybrid model in late 2022.

BACKGROUND

On May 12, 2021, Councilmember Matt Mahan along with Mayor Liccardo, Vice Mayor Jones, and Councilmembers Jimenez and Foley submitted a memo to Rules and Open Government Committee outlining several actions to provide the Council with an update toward the return to work and meetings that are a hybrid of in person and virtual meetings.

The considerations requested were:

- a. Start date and timeline for transition,
- b. Pros and cons of including standing and ad-hoc City Committees and Commissions in the new meeting protocols,
- c. Pros and cons of allowing members of Council, City Committees and Commissions to participate remotely under certain circumstances,
- d. Potential modification of certain Commissions' and Committees' requirements that meetings be held in person in different parts of the city given the City's new ability to facilitate virtual public participation from any location,
- e. Staffing capacity and needs of the various City departments involved in completing the transition and providing ongoing support services,
- f. Cost breakdowns for both required and potential support services, including staff time, language translation and expansion to city commissions and boards,
- g. And success metrics for public participation that would allow Council to assess the effectiveness of the new model over time, to include which model most advances civic engagement, such as equitable access, unique participants, and overall experience for residents providing input and feedback on council items

On June 8, 2021, during the City Manager's COVID-19 Update, City Clerk Toni Taber presented the pros and cons of hybrid meetings, and the goal date of August 3, 2021 for the first City Council meeting to be held in the hybrid environment.

The inclusion of hybrid meetings promotes more flexibility for members of the public to attend in person or remotely. This will allow families to participate without adversely impacting school nights, and dinner times. This will also give staff and the legislative body some flexibility to attend in person or virtually. A lot of people can't take the time off work or from their home life to come to Council and sit for hours waiting for the item they wish to speak on. With Hybrid meetings, they can listen on their phone while working until it gets to the item they're waiting for, or they can have their TV tuned to Channel 26 while cooking dinner.

However, there are some considerations to make as we move towards these hybrid meetings. Currently, the City is under Executive Order N-29-20 which has modified the Brown Act to allow members of the legislative body to participate remotely. By Legislative Body, we mean the City Council, Council Committee, and Boards and Commissions. When this Executive Order is rescinded or modified, the location of the members of the City Council or Board and Commission will need to be included on the agenda, and the public must be allowed to attend and participate from that location.

This means if a commission member wants to participate from home, their home address will be on the agenda and any member of the public can come to that home and must be allowed to view and speak from that location. N-29-20 is expected to be in place only through September 30, 2021.

Existing staff resources for the city council meetings is not sufficient with the expansion to hybrid mode. Even with fully in person meetings, the City has used IATSE personnel to support Public Works Audiovisual to facilitate meetings.

Also, a significant investment needs to be made on the current software and hardware in the Council Chambers and Committee rooms. The current audio system, mostly original 2005 equipment is subject to unpredictable stability which could negatively impact both hybrid and fully in person meetings. Due to City procurement backlog, supply chain issues plaguing the tech industry, increased demand from all municipalities, plus the time it takes to implement, it can take about a year or so to upgrade the Chambers and Committee Rooms to have a fully reliable solution.

One of the suggestions has been to potentially modify certain Commission and Committee requirements to have meetings held in person in different parts of the City. At this point, the community centers are not prepared to reliably host hybrid meetings of a legislative body, but with sufficient investment in staffing, network and technology, upgrades can be rolled out district by district.

However, Redistricting commission and Charter Review Commission will be testing the community centers this late summer and fall and they can serve as a pilot for hybrid meetings in the community centers.

ANALYSIS

TIMELINE

The timeline recommended by staff is

August 3, 2021—Return to City Council hybrid meetings held in person and via Zoom. Council Committees and Boards and Commissions remain virtual.

September 2021—Council Committees return with hybrid meetings held in person and via Zoom. Boards and Commissions remain virtual. Note that hybrid Committee meetings may need to start at a later date depending on staffing availability and equipment functionality.”

November 2021—Boards and Commissions resume in person. Commissioners may participate remotely, but are subject to Brown Act requirements of posting location on the agenda.

December 2021—Update Council Chamber/Committee Wing technology. Note: This is an ambitious timeline, and may need to be scheduled for July 2022.

Late 2022—Boards and Commissions move to hybrid meetings held in person and via Zoom.

INVESTMENT IN TECHNOLOGY

The City should allocate appropriate budgetary resources to fulfill requirements to install a more robust AV system in the Council Chambers. We do not currently have adequate funding to replace the chamber voting/agenda/speaker management system or add video conferencing.

In 2020, our Audio Visual (AV) Program Manager developed a “MacGyver” solution based on unrelated work he completed with point to point video conferencing, the TCP/IP network, and the audio system. His work over the course of several months (one year before the pandemic) allowed him a foundation to create a temporary solution. Essentially, he was able to remove parts from other systems and reinstalled them to patch together a solution as a “temporary fix.” The current AV systems are not designed for multipoint video conferencing.

System replacements, not repairs, are needed since the original systems are far past their normal lifecycles. Our AV team has managed the replacement of many of these individual systems over the last 6 years. The AV team replaced the TCP/IP network, the control system, the video system, the theatrical lighting system, and the voting/agenda/speaker management systems. The audio systems in the Wing have not been replaced although the AV team did an upgrade to the committee room audio system which gave us a wireless microphone system which cut set up and strike time down in half.

The audio system is about 16 years old and should be replaced as soon as possible. Once the audio DSPs expire, we will be without audio until a full replacement is complete. The committee rooms audio system is crashing at random on a regular basis and the Rotunda audio system has been down for about a year. The chamber audio system has been working well.

The replacement for the voting/agenda/speaker management system has been malfunctioning since it was installed. Our AV team worked with the contractor and then the manufacturer for about 15 months to resolve the ongoing failures, but no solution was found. That system should be replaced again, but this time, with a Mediavision system which is designed for exactly our application.

The AV systems in the Wing were not designed with the video conferencing features needed. Multipoint video conferencing has not been part of the program and as such our system does not support it. The AV systems must be redesigned and reprogrammed to integrate video conferencing into the existing system.

To expand to city community centers, upgraded internet would be required to the Community Rooms, which currently only have WiFi.

INVESTMENT IN STAFFING

The City should take action to provide proper levels of staffing to meet its intended goals. The City of San José should have an AV “team” consisting of several highly qualified engineers and technicians. No less than (1) full-time engineer and (2) full-time technicians are required.

Standard Council meeting chambers staffing and duties overview:

- City Clerk 1 – Manages Clerk function, operates VoteLynx, displays votes and tracks agenda
- City Clerk 2 - Granicus Live Manager, records legislative votes and notes for Synopsis
- Mayor’s Assistant 1 - Manages Speaker Cards, for Zoom operates 2-Min Timer
- AudioVisual Technographer - Operates chambers audiovisual system
- Two Security Officers – perform Security functions and liaison with Police

Hybrid Required additional staffing and duties overview:

- City Clerk Office – Host Zoom Webinar, elevate speakers, liaison to Overflow(s)
- AudioVisual Technographer – Supports Zoom to AV and AV1
- Security Officer – two additional Security officers

For meetings for which the Council Overflow are required the following staffing is required:

- City Clerk’s office– Co-Host Zoom Webinar, elevate speakers, liaison to Chambers for speaker management
- AudioVisual Technographer – Supports Zoom and AV in Committee Room
- Security Officer – two Security officers

If AudioVisual is called upon to support a Press Conference at City Hall on a meeting day, additional personnel, separate from Committee and Rotunda staff would be required.

The City should take action to address AV system purchasing-related issues and/or staffing. We are not sure what the best solution would be for this item, but if there was dedicated procurement/contract specialist for facilities to run purchase order requests as minor public works projects, that would be very helpful. Other teams would benefit from this adjustment as well.

MEETING IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS

City Clerk staff will be testing a portable setup (Camera, laptop, mobile hotspot only. No microphones or portable AV systems or projectors will be included) to take to community centers and other facilities in August – October, and will be able to report back after those meetings on the experience.

COST OF LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

Interpretation services in Spanish are \$190/hour for two interpreters (the minimum required) and \$280/hour for two Vietnamese language interpreters. Current Council policy is to provide interpretation upon request and for items that are generating a lot of public interest.

SUCCESS METRICS

Although the minutes list out the names of the public speakers on each item, the City Clerk's office does not keep a log of public participation in Council Meetings; therefore, it's difficult to compare attendance records for pre-COVID, during COVID, and post COVID. In order to compare the data, staff would need to go through the minutes of the previous meetings and count the number of speakers in the minutes. Currently, we don't have a staff person who can take the time to do this. We could create customer service surveys for participants. This would limit the pool to those post COVID and to those willing to fill out the survey.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

A core duty of the Office of the City Clerk is to facilitate public meetings.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum has been posted on the City Clerk's website as part of the June 29, 2021 City Council Meeting Agenda.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the Office of the City Attorney, Office of the City Manager, and Public Works.

CEQA

CEQA: Not a Project, File No. PP17-008, General Procedure and Policy Making resulting in no

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Hybrid meetings

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changes to the physical environment



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