



INNOVATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

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CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

Meeting: February 6, 2024

Subject

Cessation of Hybrid Commission and Committee Meetings

Recommended Action

Conduct City Council and Planning Commission meetings in a hybrid format while continuing to utilize in-person only meetings for all other commissions and committee meetings.

Reasons for Recommendation

In May 2023, the City Manager directed staff to cease hybrid (both remote and in-person) meetings for commissions and committees except for the City Council and Planning Commission, citing resource reallocation, public engagement metrics, and operational efficiencies. This report explains that decision and recommends the continuation of this in-person only practice, ensuring the City's commitment to effective governance and fiscal responsibility.

Background

In 2020, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City initiated remote teleconference meetings for the Council, commissions, and committees, aiming to ensure the continuity of city governance while prioritizing public health. With the diminishing impact of the pandemic and the City's adaptation to the changing health scenario, a transition was made to hybrid meetings, accommodating both remote and in-person participation for all legislative bodies. However, following Governor Newsom's declaration in February 2023, marking the end of California's COVID-19 State of Emergency, the City began moving to in-person only meeting for meetings with low remote attendee participation. To ensure consistency, the City Manager, in May 2023, directed the cessation of hybrid meetings for all commission and committee meetings, except for those of the City Council and Planning Commission. This decision was reinforced by the observation that the average remote attendance for the City

Council and Planning Commission meetings was significantly higher than for other meetings. Additionally, these two meetings are the only meetings broadcast on television, which meant their continuation in a hybrid format required no additional staff resources or time.

Analysis

Our evaluation has revealed the following key points:

Resource Intensiveness: Each hybrid meeting necessitates extensive preparatory and follow-up actions, including technological setup, active coordination, and subsequent video processing, which cumulatively demand a minimum commitment of two hours per meeting.

Overtime Implications: The execution of these tasks often extends beyond conventional work hours, leading to additional overtime remuneration for the staff involved. Minimum Cost = \$210 / Meeting

Operational Challenge: In compliance with the Brown Act, the uninterrupted presence of video staff at hybrid meetings is vital. Their role is to ensure a stable Zoom connection to avoid potential meeting cancellations or postponements, thereby guaranteeing real-time public access. A failure of the link requires immediate resolution to uphold the integrity of the meeting proceedings and legal compliance.

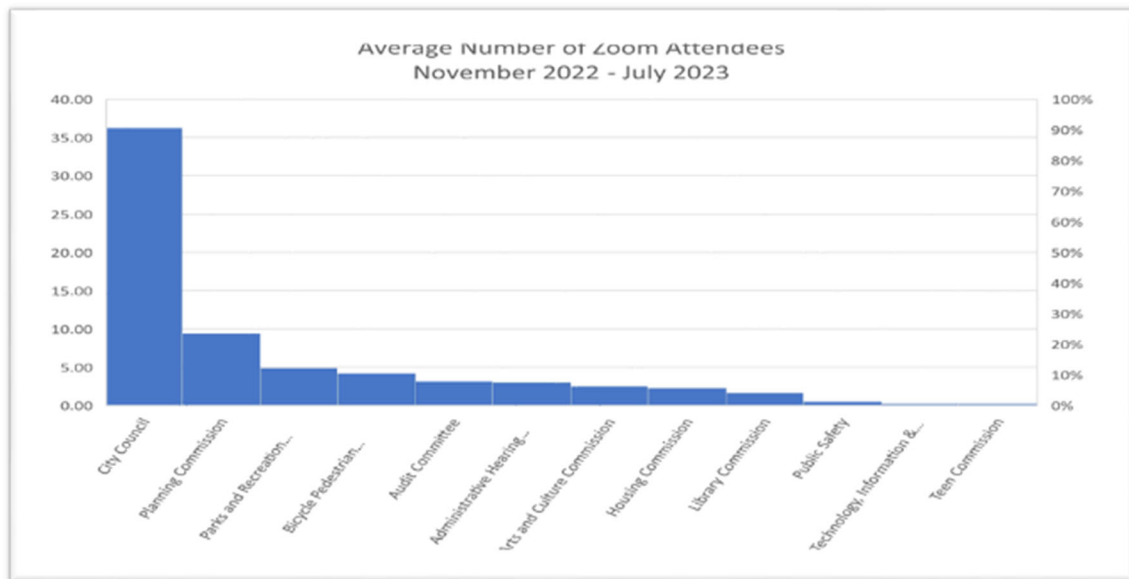
Low Public Engagement: The below data denotes the number of virtual attendees per meeting per month as well as when meetings transitioned to in-person only.

Average Number Zoom Attendee by Month										
	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	In-Person
Arts and Culture Commission	2	*	3	*	In-Person					Mar-23
Public Safety	0	*	1	*	In-Person					Mar-23
Sustainability Commission	*	*	1	*	In-Person					Mar-23
Technology, Information & Communication Commission	0	1	0	*	In-Person					Mar-23
Teen Commission	0	0	1	0	In-Person					Mar-23
Administrative Hearing Meeting	*	*	*	6	*	In-Person				Apr-23

Library Commission	2	2	*	1	*	In-Person				Apr-23
Audit Committee	2	*	8	3	4	3	2	*	In-Person	Jul-23
Bicycle Pedestrian Commission	4	4	5	6	7	2	9	1	0	Aug-23
Parks and Recreation Commission	4	0	*	11	11	3	1	4	*	Aug-23
Housing Commission	*	1	2	*	5	*	1	*	*	Sep-23
City Council	62	49	43	27	113	56	74	48	253	N/A
Planning Commission	17	5	3	9	17	6	9	*	*	N/A

- No Meeting

The following chart illustrates the average number of remote participants per meeting during the period from November 1, 2022, to July 31, 2023.



Cost-Benefit Assessment: The cost and staff time expended on facilitating Hybrid meetings are disproportionate to the level of public engagement observed.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the continued practice of conducting City Council and Planning Commission meetings in a hybrid format while continuing to utilize in-person only meetings for all other commissions and committee meetings.

Sustainability Impact

No impact.

Fiscal Impact

No impact.

California Environmental Quality Act

Not applicable.

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