



## OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

CITY HALL  
10300 TORRE AVENUE • CUPERTINO, CA 95014-3255  
TELEPHONE: (408) 777-3223 • FAX: (408) 777-3366  
CUPERTINO.ORG

## CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

Meeting: September 3, 2019

### Subject

Options for unofficial transcription of City Council meetings (continued from July 16).

### Recommended Action

Receive options for unofficial transcription of City Council meetings and provide direction to staff to use the free YouTube auto-captioning feature for transcription of Council meetings.

### Discussion

At its July 16 meeting, Council viewed a demonstration of the free YouTube auto-captioning feature which can be used to create an unofficial transcript of City Council meetings. The demonstration showed how timestamps in the transcript are live and link directly to that portion in the video. One can also search the transcript for specific words which will again link directly to that part of the video. It is also possible to copy the entire transcript and paste it into a Word document to search text.

If Council decides to implement YouTube auto-captioning, then a YouTube video link to the Council meeting would be placed on the Granicus agendas/minutes page. Meetings that extend beyond four hours would contain multiple videos with a link to a YouTube playlist. The City Council meeting would be the first video in the playlist and would automatically play each section of the meeting in order until the end of the sequence.

Another option for transcribing meetings would be to hire an outside transcription vendor service. This could be Granicus, our current vendor, or a new vendor. Using one of these services would provide a more accurate transcription but with a large cost. Additional detail regarding options and cost is listed below.

### Outside vendor transcription service

- Done by a person after the meeting from the audio/video
- Average Cost: \$33 to \$60 per hour
- Typically takes 4 to 5 times the length of the meeting to transcribe (not verbatim)
- Example: 5-hour meeting would take 20 to 25 hours to transcribe for an estimate of \$660 to \$1500 per meeting or \$15,840 to \$36,000 per year (24 meetings)
- 98% accurate

- Text is searchable

### **Granicus (current vendor) captioning and transcription service for televised meetings**

- Live transcriber during the meeting provides real-time captioning for viewers of the live Granicus feed
- Transcription document available within 48 hours after meeting (not verbatim)
- Text is searchable and contains video timestamps
- Average Cost: \$140 per hour (Example: 5-hour meeting estimate of \$700 per meeting or \$16,800 per year (24 meetings))
- After-the-fact captioning/transcription service also available at about \$200 per hour (estimate \$1,000 per meeting or \$24,000 per year)
- 98% accurate
- Text is searchable

### **You-Tube**

- Has auto-captioning feature for videos
- The auto-captioning (speech-to-text) has difficulty with proper names and syntax
- Average Cost: free
- 88-90% accurate
- Text is searchable (not verbatim)

In reaching out to other cities in the area, the City of Palo Alto uses an outside transcription service at a cost to provide “sense (summary)” minutes for reference only and action minutes and video recording are considered the official record. The action minutes record only the action whereas the “sense” minutes include a summary of all speaker comments. The Cities of Sunnyvale and San Jose use Granicus captioning services for reference only and action minutes and video recording are considered the official record.

The advantage of providing an unofficial transcript is to allow Council and the public to recap the discussion without the need to watch the video recording. Using a free service provided by YouTube would save taxpayer money. The disadvantage of using a free service, rather than an outside transcription service or Granicus, is that the transcription would not be as accurate, although it would be used for reference only.

Staff recommends providing an unofficial transcript of City Council meetings using the free YouTube auto-captioning feature.

### **Sustainability Impact**

No sustainability impact.

### **Fiscal Impact**

No fiscal impact unless Council wishes to use a vendor to create a transcript instead of using the free YouTube feature.

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Prepared by: Grace Schmidt, City Clerk

Approved for Submission by: Deborah Feng, City Manager

Attachments: None