



## OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

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## CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

Meeting: July 16, 2019

### Subject

Discuss options for unofficial transcription of City Council minutes.

### Recommended Action

Discuss options for unofficial transcription of City Council minutes and provide direction to staff to:

- a. Provide an unofficial transcript of City Council minutes using the free YouTube auto-captioning feature; and
- b. Continue the policy of providing action minutes as the official record of the legislative actions of the City Council along with the webcast video for City Council meetings

### Discussion

A majority of Councilmembers asked to agendaize discussion of options for providing an unofficial transcript of City Council minutes that would augment the official action minutes and webcast video.

Below is a summary that was provided to Council in the City Manager's items of interest memo:

### Outside vendor transcription service

- Done by a human 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
- 88-90% accurate
- 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
- 88-90% accurate
- The auto-captioning (speech-to-text) has difficulty with proper names and syntax
- Average Cost: free
- 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 and 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 as reference only.

Staff recommends providing an unofficial transcript of City Council minutes using the free YouTube auto-captioning feature and continuing the policy of providing action minutes as the official record of the legislative actions of the City Council along with the webcast video for City Council meetings.

### 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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Approved for Submission by: Deborah Feng, City Manager

Attachments: None