



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM NO. G.1
07/25/2023

SUBJECT: Streaming Options for Public City Meetings and Possible City Council Direction

DEPARTMENT: City Manager's Office
Finance and Information Systems

STAFF: Darin Gale, Assistant City Manager
Kerry Breen, Director of Finance and Information System
Margaret Wimberly, City Clerk

TITLE/RECOMMENDATION

Receive the report and provide direction, if any, to staff regarding the expansion of existing City streaming offerings for public meetings. Staff recommends the following:

1. Continue streaming/recording City Council meetings on the City's website, YouTube, and Zoom.
2. Continue streaming/recording City Council Standing Committees, Arts Commission, Youth Commission and Parks & Recreation Commission to the City's website and Zoom.
3. Add YouTube streaming for Planning Commission meetings after fully implementing the City's new agenda management system this fall.
4. Do not add additional streaming platforms at this time.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Fiscal Impact varies based on Council direction. Additional one-time costs of \$10,000 and annual recurring costs of approximately \$2,500 per platform would be incurred if additional streaming options were requested. These costs would be the responsibility of the General Fund and staff would include these costs for Council approval at the mid-year budget update in January 2024. In addition, there would be additional on-going demands on staff time depending upon the number of streaming platforms and the number of City bodies that are streamed.

BACKGROUND

The City currently streams City Council meetings on (1) the City's website, (2) the City's YouTube page (<https://www.youtube.com/c/cityofbrentwoodca>), and (3) via Zoom. The City also streams other commissions and committee meetings (e.g. Planning, Parks and Recreation, Youth, Arts, Agricultural Enterprise, Land Use and



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM NO. G.1 07/25/2023

Development) on the City's webpage. Streaming via the City website and the YouTube page offer only one-way interaction as viewers cannot participate in the meetings or provide comments, testimony, or feedback to the City decision-makers in real time. Viewers can participate in public meetings in person or via Zoom.

There has been interest expressed in expanding streaming services in two ways. First, expanding the number of City bodies streamed via YouTube to include other commissions and committees. Second, there has also been interest in adding additional streaming platform options (e.g. Facebook Live).

Expanding the number of bodies whose meetings are streamed.

As noted above, the City currently streams the meetings of the Planning, Parks & Recreation, Youth, and Arts commissions, as well as the Agricultural Enterprise and Land Use & Development committees, through the City's webpage, but not on YouTube or any other platform. Staff is looking for the Council's direction on whether any of these bodies' meetings should be streamed through YouTube or another platform.

From a technological perspective, the City staff can establish the ability to stream to third-party platforms. Adding streaming options will incur one-time costs of approximately \$10,000 for each streaming platform, with additional recurring annual costs of approximately \$2,500 for each platform. If the City were to add additional platforms for any of these bodies, there would be additional staff time commitments associated with implementing additional streaming options for each meeting. With YouTube, each video requires post-production work from staff (creating time stamps, organizing, posting) which takes approximately one hour per meeting. If the Council were to direct staff to offer YouTube streaming for an additional six commission/committee meetings per month, there would be an additional 5 to 6 hours of City Clerk staff time required per month to accomplish this.

In light of these factors, staff suggests that it would be appropriate to add YouTube streaming for Planning Commission meetings after fully implementing eScribe, the City's new agenda management system this fall.

Using additional streaming platforms.

The City Clerk surveyed the cities in Contra Costa County to gain a better understanding of the platforms that other local jurisdictions are using to provide streaming services to the public. Several cities in the County are no longer offering resident's options to participate remotely at all, and none of the cities currently utilize Facebook Live, and the few who had tried it the past indicated that low viewership and technical issues led to its discontinuation.

While YouTube allows the City to "disable comments" during a broadcast, other platforms, including Facebook Live, do not offer this option. Allowing comments presents a host of additional challenges for the City. These include:

- The public may assume that comments made on the platform are being



**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM NO. G.1
07/25/2023**

monitored, will be part of the administrative record or will be responded to by the legislative body and/or staff.

- Commenters may attempt to make public records requests of which staff is unaware or report concerns (e.g. complaints or notifications of City issues) which are not received by staff.
- The viewing experience may also be negatively impacted by the inability of the City to monitor and possibly redact inappropriate (e.g. profane, hateful or commercial based) comments.
- There also remain outstanding questions pertaining to the City's obligation to monitor or maintain any comments in accordance with Public Records Act retention requirements.

Any additional staff time necessary to review all comments made during a streamed meeting are not included in the additional staff time estimates presented above. This issue was one of the factors leading to the City electing to stream the City Council meetings via YouTube.

Given the issues identified above, staff recommends the following:

1. Continue streaming City Council meetings on the City's website, YouTube, and Zoom.
2. Continue streaming City Council Standing Committees, Arts Commission, Youth Commission and Parks & Recreation Commission only on the City's website and Zoom.
3. Add YouTube streaming for Planning Commission meetings after fully implementing the City's new agenda management system this fall.
4. Do not add additional streaming platforms at this time.

CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

Not Applicable.

PREVIOUS ACTION

There was no previous action related to this item.

DATE OF NOTICE

Not applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

Not Applicable.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Not Applicable