



CITY OF FORT BRAGG

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COUNCIL COMMITTEE ITEM SUMMARY REPORT

MEETING DATE: June 1, 2016
TO: Finance & Administration Committee
FROM: June Lemos, City Clerk
AGENDA ITEM TITLE: **RECEIVE REPORT REGARDING MODIFICATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL, COUNCIL COMMITTEE, AND PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FORMAT AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

ISSUE:

The long-form style of minutes currently used by the City of Fort Bragg takes a significant amount of staff time to prepare, is unnecessary in light of audio/video recordings of meetings readily available to the public, and is not required by the California Government Code regarding the accurate recording of proceedings of a legislative body. Brief summary minutes are the preferred method of minute taking.

DISCUSSION:

The City Clerks Association of California (CCAC) has published its Guidelines for Preparing Minutes and recommends municipalities consider adopting these guidelines that call for either brief summary or action style minutes. Attachment 1 is a chart describing the features and benefits of both brief summary and action style minutes.

Presently, the City uses long-form style minutes, as opposed to brief summary or action minutes. Long-form (also called “verbatim style”) minutes provide a very detailed account of the meeting, covering major points, speaker comments (both legislative body and public), and the flow of the discussion. In past years, this type of minutes served a necessary purpose, since the public had limited access to live streaming, audio/video recordings, and electronic copies of agenda reports and supporting materials. Today, the majority of the City’s public records requests related to legislative body meetings are for recordings, electronic copies of supporting documents, and occasionally minute excerpts. Few requests are received for the official minutes.

Most California cities have transitioned from long-form minutes to brief summary or action minutes, as these provide a more efficient, succinct, and cost-effective manner of preparing a record of City Council, Council committee, and Planning Commission actions. Auditors, judicial officers, the public, and other stakeholders rely on minutes to accurately reflect the final decisions of the body. Transitioning to brief summary or action style minutes removes the

ambiguity and misdirection that is unintentionally created by long-form minutes when the flow of the conversation is included in the written record. Additionally, streamlining to brief summary or action minutes reduces the amount of staff time spent in minute preparation. Other cities that have made the transition are spending 50 to 75 percent less time transcribing and preparing minutes. Another cost savings is a reduction in materials (pages, books) used for preserving archival minutes.

In case someone wishes to review the discussion leading up to the Council's final decision, audio/video recordings of the Council's proceedings, as well as agenda packets are maintained pursuant to the City's records retention policy.

It is recommended that the City Council direct the City Clerk to transition from long-form style minutes to brief summary minutes following the CCAC guidelines (Attachment 2). A similar transition is requested for the minutes of all Council Committee and Planning Commission meetings. Staff can provide a status report to the City Council in six months on the amount of staff time saved, the affiliated public records requests, and feedback, if any, received from stakeholders.

Long-form minutes should continue to be prepared for quasi-judicial Public Hearings and Administrative Hearings which involve the taking of evidence and result in the rendering of a written decision and adoption of findings.

RECOMMENDATION:

With the exception of Public Hearings, the City Clerk recommends transitioning to "brief summary style" for the official minutes of the City Council, Council Committees, and Planning Commission as outlined in the City Clerks Association of California Guidelines for Preparing Minutes.

The Finance & Administration Committee is asked to make a recommendation regarding this matter prior to it being brought forward to the City Council for direction.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Features and Benefits of Action and Brief Summary Style Minutes
2. CCAC Guidelines for Preparing Minutes