



AGENCY:	City Council
MEETING DATE:	October 24, 2016
DEPARTMENT:	Admin Services
PRESENTED BY:	J. Lemos

## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY REPORT

### **TITLE:**

**RECEIVE REPORT AND PROVIDE DIRECTION TO STAFF ON MODIFICATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL, COUNCIL COMMITTEE, AND PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FORMAT**

### **ISSUE:**

Beginning in July 2016, brief summary minutes have been used to record the actions taken at City Council, Planning Commission and Standing Council Committee meetings. The City Council directed this transition from long-form minutes be undertaken on a three-month trial basis. At the conclusion of the trial period, the Council is to make a determination as to whether the City should utilize brief summary minutes to record meetings on a permanent basis.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the permanent use of brief summary minutes for all City Council, Planning Commission and Standing Council Committee meetings.

### **ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):**

1. Make no modifications to the minute-taking format and revert to the long-form style of minutes in use prior to July 2016.
2. Provide further direction to staff regarding modifications to the meeting minutes format.

### **ANALYSIS:**

On June 1, 2016, the Finance & Administration Committee discussed the way minutes are maintained by the City of Fort Bragg. The City Clerks Association of California (CCAC) has published its Guidelines for Preparing Minutes Attachment 3) and recommends that municipalities consider adopting 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.

For many years, the City has prepared 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 style 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 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, verbatim minutes are unnecessary in light of the permanent online retention of audio/video recordings of all meetings which are readily available to the public. 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 permanently maintained pursuant to the City's records retention policy.

On June 13, 2016, the City Council received the Finance and Administration Committee's recommendation that meeting minutes be modified to the brief summary format. The Councilmembers agreed to a three-month trial of brief summary minutes for all meetings, beginning July 1, 2016. Council directed that all Standing Committee meetings be moved to Town Hall and live-streamed, with video recordings maintained on the City's website for later viewing. Staff was ordered to report back to the Council in October to revisit the matter and determine if the new minute format seems to be working for Council, the public, and staff.

The general consensus of Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners and City staff is that brief summary minutes save time, are more succinct and easier to read, and continue to provide an accurate recording of the proceedings of the various legislative bodies. No negative comments or concerns have been received from the public.

It is recommended that the City Council direct the City Clerk to make a permanent transition from long-form style minutes to brief summary minutes, following the CCAC guidelines (Attachment 2) for all City Council, Council Committee and Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. The CCAC Guidelines specifically state, "Verbatim style minutes should not be used, because verbatim or lengthy summary minutes do not serve the intent of the Government Code, which is to record the proceedings of the *legislative body*."

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.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Streamlining to brief summary minutes reduces the amount of staff time spent in minute preparation. Additional cost savings result from a reduction in materials (pages, books) used for preserving archival minutes.

**CONSISTENCY:**

Brief summary minutes as recommended by the CCAC are consistent with the California Government Code (specific sections listed in Attachment 2).

**IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES:**

The new format for minutes can be implemented immediately.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

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

**NOTIFICATION:**

None.

**City Clerk's Office Use Only**

Agency Action      ☐ Approved      ☐ Denied      ☐ Approved as Amended

Resolution No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Ordinance No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Moved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Seconded by: \_\_\_\_\_

Vote: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Deferred/Continued to meeting of: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Referred to: \_\_\_\_\_