

**CITY of CALABASAS****CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

DATE: APRIL 28, 2023

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBERS

FROM: MICHAEL RUSSO, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: CONTINUATION OF COUNCIL DISCUSSION ON CONDUCTING HYBRID COMMISSION MEETINGS ENABLING THE PUBLIC TO PARTICIPATE REMOTELY OR IN-PERSON

MEETING

DATE: MAY 10, 2023

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

On March 17, 2020, the Governor issued an Executive Order suspending certain provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act in order to allow for local legislative bodies to conduct their meetings completely telephonically or by other electronic means. The Calabasas City Council held remote meetings via Zoom starting in April 2020. In October 2022, the City Council held its first hybrid meeting, allowing members of the public, staff or Council members to participate either in person or remotely. In February 2023, the Council directed that all City Commissions should also be conducted as hybrid meetings with in-person and Zoom for a two-month trial period in March and April to gauge virtual attendance by the public.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

On February 8, 2023 and February 22, 2023 staff made presentations to Council on the cost of producing all City Commission meetings in a hybrid format – where some participants are remote and some in Chambers. Staff showed hybrid Council and Commission meetings are much more labor-intensive and more expensive to produce

than in-person meetings, such as those held before March 2020. In fact, the cost is more than double.

Looking back at Q4 of 2022 and Q1 of 2023, there were 20 meetings of City Commissions. The individual meeting times varied, but meetings consumed approximately 40 hours of time that required staffing. If you recall at the February 8, 2023 Council meeting, staff presented the cost breakdown for a typical 40 hours of meeting time:

Traditional (Pre-Pandemic):

Staff: 2 Senior Media Specialists

COST: \$104.54/hr. (1 FT + 1 PT)

Example: 40 hours of meetings = \$4,181.60

*Excluding any overtime

Hybrid Meeting:

Staff: 2 Senior Media Specialists (1 FT + 1 PT)

1 Senior IT Specialist

1 Media Supervisor

1 Department staff (from corresponding department)

COST: \$248.81 plus cost of the 5th staff person from corresponding department

Example: 40 hours of meetings = \$9,952.40 plus cost of 5th person

*Excluding any overtime

One caveat with this February 8, 2023 report was the exclusion of overtime costs. Overtime is an added cost that cannot be waived without the hiring of additional staff. Most times, an IT Specialist and Senior Media Specialists cannot be brought in later in the day to work on an evening meeting. Their plates are already full with duties that require a full 40 hours/week before evening Commission meeting time is incurred. The part-time Senior Media Specialist can – and is – brought-in later on meeting days.

We looked at the number of overtime hours incurred during the March and April trial period for hybrid Commission meetings. Communications staff worked a total of 72 overtime hours in March and April – most of those hours were devoted to hybrid Commission meetings and hybrid Council meetings. Factoring out Council meetings and other overtime hours, staff logged 29.25 hours of overtime for hybrid Commission meetings. At 1.5x the regular hourly costs listed above, hybrid Commission meetings led to \$10,916.54 in overtime costs for Communications staff for March and April for six meetings.

At the February 22, 2023 meeting, staff received guidance from the City Attorney that new legislation severely limited Commissioners' ability to participate remotely –

all but requiring them to meet in Chambers in person, with the public available to participate in person as well.

Taking into consideration the amount spent to produce hybrid Commission meetings, the question remains should the City still provide the hybrid option via Zoom.

Council directed staff to look at the number of March and April 2023 Commission meeting attendees on Zoom. There were some meetings canceled in March and April, but here is the breakdown in remote attendees who used Zoom for the six meetings which did take place:

Commission	Date	Zoom Participants
Library Commission	3-20-23	1
Planning Commission	4-6-23	2
Parks, Recreation & Education Commission	4-10-23	2
Communications & Technology Commission	4-18-23	0
Planning Commission	4-20-23	18
Public Safety Commission	4-24-23	1

The table shows Commission meeting attendance via Zoom in March and April was very low – with the exception of the April 20, 2023 Planning Commission meeting. On the Planning Commission agenda that particular night was a request for a large addition to a home in Saratoga Hills, which drew a lot of interest.

At the earlier Council presentations, staff discussed the “Hybrid Lite” concept where no Commission meetings would be hybrid, except for those with a likelihood of great public interest. Examples of this would be a controversial land-use item before the Planning Commission – similar to the April 20th meeting shown above. Routine meetings with non-controversial agenda items would not warrant the extra Zoom expense for taxpayers since the public can still attend the meeting in person. Commission Chairs and City staff can determine which meetings would necessitate a hybrid option. The Communications Department would adequately advertise and promote the hybrid participation.

REQUESTED ACTION:

Discuss the costs and provide direction on whether to continue hybrid Commission meetings, or return to in-Chamber pre-pandemic traditional meetings, or utilize “hybrid lite” concept for meetings only when substantial items are on the agenda to be discussed.

ATTACHMENTS:

PowerPoint Presentation