



Council Agenda Report

To: Mayor Grisanti and the Honorable Members of the City Council

Prepared by: Mary Linden, Executive Assistant

Approved by: Steve McClary, Interim City Manager

Date prepared: July 14, 2021 Meeting date: August 9, 2021

Subject: Public Speaker Video

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Consider whether to direct staff to allow members of the public to be displayed with video while speaking at the City's public meetings.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommended action.

WORK PLAN: This item was not included in the Adopted Workplan for Fiscal Year 2021-2022.

DISCUSSION: At its Regular meeting on July 12, 2021, the City Council requested staff bring back an item to discuss whether to allow the public to have video turned on during the City's virtual public meetings.

In 2020, when the City first made plans to begin holding public meetings virtually, concerns were expressed when considering whether or not to allow the public to appear on video, including:

- Zoom bombing – This was a growing trend at the beginning of the pandemic where individuals would crash public Zoom meetings to show inappropriate images and videos, such as occurred during a City of Davis, California Council meeting in March 2020. With worldwide name recognition, there was concern that Malibu could be a popular target for attention seekers.
- Distracting or inappropriate backgrounds – Members of the public may not always consider the appropriateness of what appears in the background when they turn on video. This includes other people who may be in the background and not be camera-ready (may not be dressed appropriately, doing something they do not want recorded as part of a public meeting, etc.), items on display that may be considered

by some to be inappropriate or offensive, etc. The ability to create personalized virtual backgrounds also provides opportunities for political or otherwise offensive or biased depictions to appear publicly behind or in lieu of a speaker's image.

- Extra technical steps for each public speaker – For each speaker, the City's Media staff working the technical side of meetings must locate the speaker in the meeting, ask them to turn on their microphone (sometimes more than once), confirm the speaker can be heard and, after the speaker's comment period ends, shut down that speaker's microphone quickly before doing it all again for the next speaker. If video was added, staff would have to ask them to turn on their camera and turn it back off at the end of their comment. This might add a small amount of confusion for the less tech-savvy users who would have two pop-ups to respond to before they could start their comment, as well as extra steps for staff. Overall, this is doable, but minimizing technical complications as much as possible leads to a more efficient meeting.
- Media staff become video police – In addition to managing speakers, the Media staff have many things to do while managing the meetings, including loading and running presentations, assisting Council/Commission members and staff with technical problems, etc. Allowing public video would add an additional responsibility of policing what is or is not appropriate to be seen. The Council has commented on County and Coastal Commission meetings where public speakers appear on screen, but those agencies also have larger staffs dedicated solely to running meetings and also have the ability for a delay (7-10 seconds), which provides time to pull something before it is aired publicly. The City is not set up with that type of enhanced technology.

It is possible for video to be allowed during the City's public meetings. Staff requests that the Council carefully consider these concerns when considering whether to add this feature to public meetings. Should the Council choose to allow public video, it is requested that specific criteria and protocols be established for the public, particularly with regard to minimizing the possibility of inappropriate views and meeting interruptions or delays.

ATTACHMENTS: None.