



# Council Agenda Report

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

Prepared by: Kelsey Pettijohn, City Clerk

Approved by: Steve McClary, Interim City Manager

Date prepared: September 13, 2021 Meeting date: September 27, 2021

Subject: Public Speaker Time Deferrals

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Consider whether to direct staff to allow members of the public to defer their time to another speaker during virtual meetings.

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

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

**DISCUSSION:** At its Regular meeting on August 23, 2021, the City Council requested staff bring back an item to discuss whether to allow members of the public to defer their time to another speaker during virtual meetings.

The City has historically allowed individuals to cede their opportunity to speak on an item and defer one minute of their time to another speaker. A speaker could have up to five people defer time, for a total not to exceed eight minutes. Speakers receiving deferred time were required to submit their own Request to Speak form along with all forms deferring time, and individuals deferring their time were required to be present when the item was heard for the extra minute to be added to the speaker's time.

When the City transitioned to virtual public meetings in 2020, its virtual meeting platform, PrimeGov, was unable to accommodate time deferrals. Staff has put in a feature request to modify the existing speaker signup form to accommodate time deferrals, but that feature has not been developed yet. Time deferrals are not a very common practice in Brown Act meetings, and it is not usually a priority for meeting solution software developers. In order to accommodate time deferrals in virtual public meetings, staff would need to develop a new speaker signup form separate from the virtual meeting

platform or a parallel process to collect time deferral signups separately from speaker signups.

If the Council chooses to allow time deferrals in virtual public meetings, there may be some difficulties and delays while staff confirms that all of the individuals deferring time are present in the meeting. Individuals who do not regularly participate in City Council or other public meetings may not realize they have to participate in the Zoom meeting to defer their time, instead of watching the YouTube live stream. They might also join the meeting under a different name than the name used for the deferral. There also may be confusion with speaker forms allowing multiple signups and possibly multiple signup systems that could result in individuals inadvertently signing up multiple times to defer time to different speakers or attempting to defer time and also speak themselves. The Mayor will need to determine how to handle these situations if staff is not able to get clarification from all the individuals involved before the meeting.

Should the Council choose to allow time deferrals during virtual meetings, staff will develop a process and instructions for time deferral signups and post this information on meeting agendas and the [virtual meeting webpage](#). Furthermore, as an option should the Council choose to allow time deferrals, the City Council may want to consider directing staff to initially proceed with a pilot or trial program to determine the effectiveness of the system and evaluate what impacts it is having on public meetings.

ATTACHMENTS: None.