


Agenda Report Reviewed by:
City Manager: 

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM

Meeting Date: November 21, 2023 (Continued from Nov 7, 2023 Council Meeting)
To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: City Administration
Subject: Consideration of Amendment to City Council Protocols as Noted Below:

Amendment to use of Hybrid Meeting Format for Agenda Review Committee Meetings and City Council Special Meetings (Closed Session Meetings) Only

Recommendation: It is recommended that the City Council Consider Amendments to the City Council Protocols and Eliminate to Require Hybrid Format Only for Agenda Review Committee Meetings and City Council Special Meetings (Closed Session Meetings) Only

Funding: Currently Budgeted: _____ Yes _____ No XX N/A
Net General Fund Cost: None

Account Code/Costs authorized in City Approved Budget (if applicable) AK (verified by Administrative Services Department)

INTRODUCTION:

This item is to request that the City Council Consider Amendments to the City Council Protocols and Eliminate to Require Hybrid Format Only for Agenda Review Committee Meetings and City Council Special Meetings (Closed Session Meetings).

Approval of this item will not affect any other City Meetings such as: Regular City Council Meetings; Planning Commission Meetings; Design Review Board Meetings; Climate Action Committee Meetings; or Budget Committee Meetings. These meetings will all remain in Hybrid (Zoom and In Person Format).

BACKGROUND

City Council Policy Number 5 was adopted to approve Establishing Rules for the Conduct of Its Meetings, Proceedings and Business to provide an effective environment for the City Council to provide leadership to ensure that the business of the City is conducted in an orderly and efficient manner to facilitate sound City Council and public deliberation and decision making.

Tonight’s agenda item is to discuss Eliminate to Require Hybrid Format Only for Agenda Review Committee Meetings and City Council Special Meetings (Closed Session Meetings) Only). Discussion of this request for other City Meetings would require a separate agenda item as this item is for Agenda Review Committee and City Council Special Meetings (Closed Session Meetings) only. These meetings do not have set scheduled meeting dates/or times.

DISCUSSION:

As of March 2020, the City Council has conducted Zoom Only City Meetings; and as of March 7, 2023, the City has been conducting In Person and Zoom Format Meetings for all City Meetings that fall under the Brown Act. Those meetings are: City Council, Agenda Review Committee, Planning Commission, Design Review Board, Public Arts Committee, Climate Action Committee and Budget Committee Meetings.

Most meetings (other than City Council Closed Session Meetings and Agenda Review Committee Meetings) are held at the Sebastopol Youth Annex. These meetings fall on a Tuesday to limit the amount of set up/take down required by Community Center as well as to have IT personnel maintain a set schedule for planning purposes.

However, this past year, the City Council Closed Session Meetings as well as Agenda Review Committee meetings have been held in different locations due to the lack of space at City Hall which has created the following issues:

1. Conducting these meetings at City Hall has required the displacement of City staff who were working out of the Conference Room at City Hall. This means that during the meeting, City staff personnel were required to depart their work stations in the conference room and temporarily work out of a shared office space for the length of the Closed Session Meeting;
2. Conducting these meetings at either the Police Station, Youth Annex, or Community Center Green Room, has required advance inquiries to the Police Department or Community Center for availability (this at times can be difficult as the Council can hold special meetings that only require a 24 hour meeting notice per the Brown Act). In this type of a meeting situation, there may not be enough time to:
 - a. Reserve the Room;
 - b. Work with Community Center Staff or Public Works Staff to Set up the Meeting Room (if available);
 - c. Schedule with Public Works Staff the requirement to move the Video Equipment from City Hall to the Meeting location as the City does not have permanent video equipment in any location;
 - d. Scheduling with Public Works staff removes them from their day to day duties to schedule movement of the equipment on short notice;
 - e. Continued movement of the video equipment can cause potential damage (especially if there is bad weather such as rain during movement of the equipment)

In review of the agenda review committee meetings and Closed Session City Council Special Meetings, in the past year it was determined that there was an estimate of 5-8 members of the community attending one or more agenda review committee and Special City Council Closed Session Meetings.

A closed session in person and zoom format requires that the City Council open the meeting in open session, allow for three minutes of public comment for the Closed Session Item Only, and then close the meeting to adjourn into Closed Session. At the end of the closed session the Council re-opens the meeting for any report out.

Agenda Review Committee meetings discuss proposed agenda items for future City Council Meeting. The Committee only discusses the item to determine if placement on an agenda item is appropriate; if additional information is needed for the item to consider placement on an agenda; and determine the proposed Council meeting date for discussion of the item by the entire Council.

As noted above, there has not been substantial public interest in these two meetings for public comment and in consideration of Public Works staff time and potential wear and tear on movement of video equipment, City staff is recommending that these two Meetings not be required to be in Hybrid Format.

If approved, members of the public can attend the meetings in person at the scheduled meeting location. This item is not to limit public participation, but to reduce use of Public Works Staff time to set up/take down the special meetings as well as schedule time to move video equipment for said meetings.

CITY COUNCIL AND/OR GENERAL PLAN GOALS:

Goal 5: Provide Open and Responsive Municipal Government Leadership

5.3.3. Encourage and increase public awareness of City Policies, decisions, programs and all public processes and meetings, by investigating effective methods of communication and obtaining feedback from the community.

Goal 6: Maintain a highly qualified Staff that works to provide services to serve and protect the residents, visitors and business of this community.

Action CHW 5c: Practice an open-door policy in City programs, and actively engage and encourage participation from all individuals regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, class, disability, sexual orientation, and gender.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

As of the writing of this staff report, the City has not received any public comment. However, if staff receives public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff report such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting. In addition, public comments may be offered during the public comment portion of the consent calendar.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting date.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No known funding impact at this time for approving Amendments to the City of Sebastopol Council Protocols. However there would be staff savings from moving equipment and set up / take down costs.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council Approve Amendments to the City Council Protocols and Eliminate to Require Hybrid Format Only for Agenda Review Committee Meetings and City Council Special Meetings (Closed Session Meetings) Only

ATTACHMENTS:

None