

“PARTICIPATION IS THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR COMMUNITY” is the first statement on the city governance webpage. On 12/19/23 a resolution to “ return to in person only city council meetings” is before the council. Frequent disruptions from porn to technical problems have occurred. In the last meeting organized white supremacist called in and once racist statements were made, were cut off.

Those of us who have professionally managed online public forums are familiar with the problems that can occur with public Zoom meetings and have also utilized a wide range of disruption prevention measures such specific Zoom settings including password use. In the staff report there was a lack of specific steps taken to mitigate disruptive events such as racist language. The table comparing other municipalities in person and hybrid zoom meetings is of little use, look to institutions (tech companies, higher ed) who have successfully dealt with Zoom disruptions.

If the actual cost is \$20,000 for Zoom meetings, does that include Budget, Planning Commission, Design Review and all city related Zoom meetings? If we want to play with the big dogs, we must invest in the up to date remote meeting technology.

#### Benefits of Zoom meetings

- Anyone can call or log on, a true model of inclusivity
- Helps include people with family, work, caretaker responsibilities
- Is ADA friendly
- Allows immunocompromised or immuno-cautious to participate safely
- Avoid sitting on a metal folding chair for 5 hours
- Can see the screen better online than in person (ie PowerPoints presentations. The in-person audience must look over their shoulder to see the screen and can not enlarge screen as one can on a computer.
- Increased likelihood of attendance of representatives from other city committees, city departments, and local community groups

- Increased likelihood various representatives from outside city attend
- Folks from the margins feel more empowered to comment than the intimidation of standing in front of a microphone
- Online participants on digital devices/computers can look up documents, have access to a table and power during meetings
- “Going back to in-person meetings is like going back to pagers after cell phones.”

### Big Decisions Ahead

With the declaration of a fiscal emergency it's more critical than ever to assure public participation. People who rely on newspapers and social media as their sole information source may not be accurately informed. In person only meetings can deter potential investors, businesses and community groups which are important partners in the city's financial future,

### Disruptions

It's horrible to be the subject of racist language. It's inexcusable. Nonetheless backing down from white supremist's and disruptors is weak and does not align with who we are as a community. Mute, denounce and carry on the meeting. They'll get bored.

### Conclusion

Support public participation by continuing online access to city meetings.

With Respect,  
Michelle Kelly