

Date: December 22, 2021

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Monique De La Garza, City Clerk
Thomas B. Modica, City Manager

MD
Linda J. Jatum

Subject: **Feasibility of Telephonic Public Comment for City Council Meetings**

On July 13, 2021, the City Council requested the City Manager and City Clerk to research the feasibility of allowing telephonic public comment at City Council meetings. This memorandum provides an update on options for allowing telephonic/virtual public comment at City Council meetings.

Background:

To comply with COVID-19 public health orders, on March 17, 2020, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order N-29-20, which suspended portions of the Brown Act. It required that the public can observe and address the meetings telephonically or electronically. Prior to the order being signed, the City of Long Beach (City) complied with the requirements by live streaming our City Council meetings on our Granicus page, LBTVs website, and LBTVs cable channels, and providing members of the public two methods to submit their comments electronically via eComment or by email to cityclerk@longbeach.gov.

On June 16, 2020, City Council meetings were made virtual. After a couple months of working with Technology and Innovation Department (TID), City staff found a viable solution to provide telephonic public comment at council meetings, going above the legal requirement. This process required members of the public to sign up in advance of the meeting and was labor-intensive, requiring two to five City Clerk employees and two TID employees to run the equivalent of a small call center throughout the duration of each meeting. Providing telephonic public comment in this manner on City Council meeting days has an estimated annual cost of \$15,000 to \$20,000 in City Clerk staff overtime, plus the cost of TID staff time and equipment costs. Additional challenges in running a call center includes limited space for sufficient staffing and interpreters.

On June 11, 2021, the Governor signed Executive Order No. N-08-21, which extended the Brown Act waivers through September 30, 2021. On September 16, 2021, the Governor signed Assembly Bill (AB) 361, which took effect beginning October 1, 2021. Currently, under AB 361 we are required to provide telephonic/virtual public comment for teleconference/hybrid meetings only.

Due to challenges of original telephonic public comment methodology at City Council meetings, including staff shortages and physical space constraints, the Office of the City Clerk has identified two options to allow virtual public comment (in place of the telephonic public comment) at City Council meetings:

Option 1: KUDO

The Office of the City Clerk and TID have been using a new software called KUDO. This software provides virtual meeting participants with a better viewing and interpretation experience. Members of the public would be able to join virtually from a smart phone/tablet app or computer and use the raise hand feature when we call for public comment on the item. KUDO would allow for simultaneous interpretation if public comment is provided in a different language, which is not available through WebEx.

The KUDO-Pro Plus service includes streaming and recording, allowance for up to 1,000 attendees with 300 interpretation service hours, and is estimated to cost \$20,000 to \$25,000 annually.

Option 2: Zoom

The City has a Zoom enterprise account that allows members of the public to join virtually from a computer, smart phone, or tablet application. Zoom also allows for consecutive interpretation if public comment is provided in a different language.

Both Option 1 and Option 2 outlined above will work for the City's needs and could be implemented with existing staff resources.

If you have any questions, please contact Tom Modica at (562) 570-5091 or Monique DelaGarza (562) 570-6981.

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