



CITY OF BANNING STAFF REPORT

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Douglas Schulze, City Manager

PREPARED BY: Doug Schulze, City Manager

MEETING DATE: November 12, 2024

SUBJECT: Discuss Options for Use of Zoom During City Council Meetings

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide direction to the City Manager regarding use of Zoom for City Council meetings.

BACKGROUND:

In response to social distancing requirements during COVID 19, use of Zoom for public meetings so members of the City Council, staff, and consultants could participate remotely. In addition, members of the public were also provided with the opportunity to participate via Zoom. After social distancing restrictions were lifted, use of Zoom was continued until "Zoom Bombing" became problematic for several organizations, including the City of Banning. Since the decision to use Zoom was an administrative decision and not Council policy, an administrative decision was made to discontinue use of Zoom for public participation. Use of Zoom is limited to consultants, City Treasurer and occasionally by staff participating remotely, which requires identity verification. When Zoom was offered as an option for members of the public to participate, there were just a few people online each meeting so, it was not used broadly.

Currently, staff resources are used to make all public meetings accessible on Government Access Channel 10 and streaming on the City website. These options do not allow members of the public to comment during meetings, but they are able to view meetings in real time. Members of the public are currently able to provide comments during the City Council's meeting by either attending City Council meetings and making verbal comments to the City Council at the appropriate times or by submitting written comments to the City Clerk on items on the Council's agenda, which comments are forwarded to the City Council for the Council's consideration. While Zoom Bombing seems to be less of an issue, it could be related to the fact that many public agencies discontinued use of Zoom for public meetings. Use of Zoom as a webinar provides more control because access to speak must be granted by a monitor (staff member), which also reduces the likelihood of Zoom Bombing. However, a staff person would either need to be hired or paid overtime to serve as monitor during public meetings.

City Managers in Riverside County were asked if they use Zoom for public participation in City Council meetings. In total, 16 cities did not allow remote participation, 3 cities did, and 3 did not respond to the poll. These were the exact responses:

- Beaumont - No
- Calimesa - No
- Cathedral City - No
- Coachella - Yes
- Corona - No
- Desert Hot Springs - No

- Eastvale - No
- Hemet - No
- Indian Wells - Did not respond
- Indio - No
- LaQuinta - Did not respond
- Menifee - No
- Moreno Valley - No
- Palm Desert - Yes
- Palm Springs - Yes
- Perris - No
- Rancho Mirage - No
- Riverside - Did not respond
- San Jacinto - No
- Temecula - No
- Wildomar - No
- Yucaipa - No

JUSTIFICATION:

Allowing members of the public to provide comments during City Council meetings via Zoom would allow for an additional form of public participation and engagement during City Council meetings.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Should the Council provide direction to offer the ability to make public comments via Zoom during City Council meetings, an additional staff member would be needed to monitor and promote individuals to presenter status when members of the public request to speak.

ALTERNATIVES:

Option 1 - Offer Zoom as an additional form of public participation during City Council meetings.
Option 2 - Do not offer Zoom as an additional for public participation during City Council meetings.

BUDGETED?:

No

CONTRACT/AGREEMENT:

No