

AGENDA REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

MEETING DATE: January 1, 2016

TO: Mayor and City Council

TITLE: GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approve transitioning to {"action" or "brief"} summary style for the City Council's official minutes as outlined in the City Clerks Association of California Guidelines for Preparing Minutes.

DISCUSSION: The City Clerks Association of California (CCAC) has published its Guidelines for Preparing Minutes and has recommended municipalities consider adopting these guidelines that call for either brief summary or action style minutes. Attached is a chart describing the features and benefits of both brief summary and action style minutes.

Presently, the City uses long-form style minutes, as opposed to brief summary or action minutes. Long-form ("verbatim") minutes provide a very detailed account of the meeting, covering major points, speaker comments (both legislative body and public), and the flow of the discussion. In past years, these types of minutes have served a necessary purpose, since the public had limited access to live streaming, video/audio recordings, and electronic copies of agenda reports and supporting materials. Today the majority of the City's public records requests related to legislative body meetings are for recordings, electronic copies of supporting documents, and occasionally minute excerpts. Few requests are received for the official minutes.

Most California cities have transitioned from long-form minutes to either brief summary or action minutes as the most efficient, succinct, and cost-effective manner for preparing a record of City Council action. Auditors, judicial officers, the public, and other stakeholders rely on minutes to accurately reflect the final decisions of the body. Transitioning to brief summary or action style minutes removes the ambiguity and misdirection that is unintentionally created by long-form minutes when the flow of the conversation is included in the written record. Additionally, streamlining to brief summary or action minutes reduces the amount of staff time spent in minute preparation. Other cities that have made the transition are spending 50 to 75 percent less time in transcribing and preparing minutes. Another cost savings is a reduction in materials (pages, books) used for preserving archival minutes.

In case of someone wishing to review the discussion leading up to the Council's final decision, audio/video recordings of the Council's proceedings, as well as agenda packets are maintained pursuant to the City's records retention policy.

It is recommended that the City Council direct the City Clerk to transition from long-form style minutes to brief summary minutes {or action minutes if that is the preference of the City Clerk}, following the CCAC guidelines. Staff will provide a status report to the City Council in six

Meeting Date:

Subject:

months on the amount of staff time saved, the affiliated public records requests, and feedback, if any, received from stakeholders.

Prepared by: Name, Title

Approved by: Name, Title

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) Features and Benefits of Action and Summary Minutes
- 2) CCAC Guidelines for Preparing Minutes

FEATURES AND BENEFITS OF ACTION AND BRIEF SUMMARY STYLE MINUTES

Features of Action Style Minutes

- Records Final Decisions Made
- For Public Hearings – Lists Speaker’s Name and Position on Each Issue Raised (i.e. Supported or Opposed)

Features of Brief Summary Style Minutes

- Records Final Decisions Made
- For Public Hearings – Lists Speaker’s Name and Position on Each Issue Raised (i.e. Supported or Opposed)
- Summarizes Only Main Points that Lead to a Final Decision
- Records Only Fully Developed Points in Final Form
- Consolidates Points Made by Several Speakers Into One Sentence or Short Paragraph
- Attributes Views and Points to the Collective City Council, Not Individual Persons
- Records the Thought Process of the Entire City Council as a Body, Not Individuals’ Thoughts
- May Record Key Advice Given to the Council in Making the Final Decision
- May Note Brief Reason for Dissension of One or More Members
- For Oral Communications/Public Comments – Lists Speaker’s Name, Overall Topic, Stance/Position
- For Ceremonial Presentations, Announcements, Non-Business Items – Lists Subject Matter

Benefits of Both Action and Brief Summary Style Minutes

- Provides Brevity and Clarity for Audits & Judicial Review
- Reduces Staff Time
- Removes Staff Interpretation of Statements and Determination of What Comments Should Be Included
- Eliminates Ambiguity by Omitting Discussion Not Relevant to Final Decision
- Eliminates Single-Member Opinions
- Places Emphasis on a Collective City Council, Not Individual Persons