

Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR  
October 15, 2002

To: Honorable Mayor and  
Members of the City Council  
From: Weldon Rucker, City Manager  
Subject: Cablecasting Zoning Adjustment Board Meetings

INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of September 17, 2002 Council directed the City Manager to submit a report on the feasibility of televising the meetings of the Zoning Adjustment Board (ZAB). The request was made following the presentation of a citizens' petition asking that the ZAB meetings be televised.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Presently, the meetings of Berkeley City Council, the Rent Stabilization Board, and Berkeley Unified School District are televised. Citizens who want to see ZAB meetings must attend the proceedings in person. Some of the issues to come before the ZAB have generated wide public interest, and on occasions meetings have been full to capacity. Further, meetings sometimes run very late.

Cablecasting ZAB meetings would alleviate potential overcrowding in the Council Chambers and open the meetings to a wider audience. It would also allow citizens to record meetings on their VCRs and watch them at a more convenient time.

BACKGROUND

The City of Berkeley has two local cable TV channels: Channel 25 and Channel 78. The channels are made available by AT&T Broadband Inc., as part of that organization's cable TV franchise agreement with the City of Berkeley. Berkeley Community Media (BCM) operates the channels under a contract with the City.

The City's contract with BCM stipulates broadcasting City of Berkeley Council meetings over the local cable network. BCM also has agreements for cablecasting the meetings of the Rent Stabilization Board and Berkeley Unified School District. (Broadcasting over cable is referred to as cablecasting.)

All these meetings are cablecast from the City Council Chambers, which is equipped with permanent camera installations, a sophisticated television control room, and a connection to BCM's headquarters that in turn connects to AT&T's cable network.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

Cablecasting ZAB meetings would require an amendment to BCM's contract with the City. BCM have agreed in principle to cablecast the meetings and is currently negotiating with City staff. Two important caveats BCM has stipulated are that meetings must take place in the Council Chambers and that they will be cablecast on Channel 78. Staff hopes to have a new agreement concluded that will allow cablecasting to begin in November.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

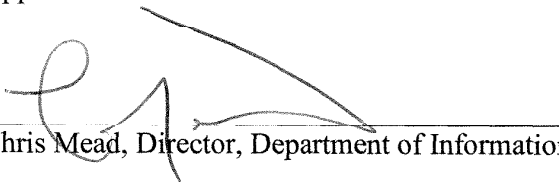
The final cost will be determined by negotiation. Staff and BCM have already agreed that instead of simply adding the ZAB meeting schedule to the contract, BCM and the City will agree on an overall total of public meetings that can be cablecast from the Council Chambers in any one year. This total will include all Council and ZAB meetings, but will allow for a limited number of other public meetings.

The initial additional funding for the contract amendment will come from the Planning Department budget, but future funding may be shared more widely if other public meetings are cablecast.

CONTACT PERSON

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Approved:

  
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