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Dear City Council members,

I listen to nearly every city council meeting remotely. This is not only for my role as reporter, but I also ensure that the meetings are broadcast to Kotzebue residents on the radio. This is a role that is very important to me personally, because I believe that access to local government is a significant part of a functioning democracy.

In my position, I hear firsthand how difficult it is for listeners to follow the proceedings – based on the sound quality of the city's audio setup. I routinely receive calls from citizens who are unable to hear portions of the broadcast. This ongoing problem disproportionately affects residents who are unable to attend in person, including elders, people with disabilities, and those working during the meetings or out of town. The ability to listen remotely is sometimes the only option for citizens who want to stay informed and engaged in local government.

I also occasionally listen to city council meetings in the outlying villages in my role as a reporter. Those villages often use Zoom. I have never experienced difficulty hearing those meetings.

I am asking the Council to consider investing in an updated system to allow for better sound quality. I cannot overstate how poor the sound quality is for some of the meetings. Accessible and audible public meetings are a basic part of transparent local government.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Desiree Hagen