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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 12, 2024
TO: City Council
FROM: Jon Maginot, Assistant City Manager
SUBJECT: AUDIO/VISUAL AT COMMISSION MEETINGS

At the February 27, 2024 City Council meeting, Council members requested an update on perceived audio/visual issues at Commission meetings. Specifically, Council members noted that at times the audio for these meetings was sometimes difficult to hear. Staff has prepared this memo to provide information regarding this situation.

In early 2023, City Council directed that Commission meetings were to resume in person following the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Council directed that these meetings be held in a hybrid manner to allow members of the public to observe these meetings remotely. Beginning in March 2023, Commission meetings have been held under this hybrid format.

To facilitate the number of Commission meetings each month, staff procured “Zoom” TVs. These televisions are specially created to allow for meetings to be held using Zoom. Each TV is equipped with a camera and microphone as well as the software necessary to join a Zoom meeting. The limitation of this set up is that the camera is only able to have a fixed view, meaning that the meetings are not able to zoom in on the individual speaking. As well, while the microphone is omnidirectional and capable of amplifying sounds from across the room, if an individual is turned away from microphone the microphone will have difficulty picking up the sound. Another potential issue could be the size of the room that Commissions are meeting in. A larger room may cause issues with the microphone picking up the sound.

As a quick step to hopefully address audio issues, staff will plan to schedule Commission meetings in smaller rooms whenever possible. This may alleviate some of the audio issues that individuals have been experiencing. At times, this will not be practical, for example if a meeting has an agenda item that may draw many members of the public. If the perceived audio issues continue following this action, staff will investigate other potential solutions. In addition, members of the public may utilize the “closed captioning” function which is built into Zoom which may assist in understanding the conversation.