

Wendy Wood

Subject: FW: Town Council Policy Regarding Remote Attendance for Boards, Commissions and Committees

From: Rick Tinsley [REDACTED]

Sent: Saturday, January 21, 2023 5:28 PM

To: Council <Council@losgatosca.gov>

Subject: Town Council Policy Regarding Remote Attendance for Boards, Commissions and Committees

EXTERNAL SENDER

Councilmembers,

In the latest Council Policy Committee packet Staff proposes to eliminate remote public participation and the use of Zoom in the above referenced meetings.

I urge the Council to reject Staff's proposal and maintain the use of Zoom (or similar hybrid options) for these meetings.

Over the past two years of using Zoom, it has been clear that the use of this technology has provided several benefits:

1. Increased Public participation in and observation/attendance of meetings
2. Increased Staff observation of meetings that are of interest even if they are not Participants.
3. More Council members can observe meetings of interest (as Attendees not Participants)
4. Enhanced ability for Commissioners/Board Members/Committee Members to Participate remotely as necessary consistent with existing rules(video conferencing allows a more uniform ability than telephone-only participation).
5. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, archived recordings of these meeting are EXTREMELY valuable to all stakeholders for catching up with meetings they were unable to attend in real time or to simply review/verify content from a prior meeting. Many people have grown to rely on these recordings to become better informed on Town business.

Prior to using Zoom as prompted by the pandemic, Staff made audio recordings of some meetings but to my knowledge such audio files were never published or archived.

In the Council Policy Committee packet, Staff states "It would be infeasible for the subject matter experts to be simultaneously supporting the Commission.....while also managing the Zoom participation of public and/or Commissioners." On the contrary I observed our Staff doing a very good job of this and becoming more and more adept over time with increased experience as most people have during the pandemic. Perhaps it is more of a challenge for some people than others and if so there are some simple solutions such as having one of the Commissioners/Board Members serve as Zoom manager, or having a high school or college intern manage this function. I am sure there are many other workable solutions that would allow us to maintain the valuable transparency this technology enables.

The use of this technology is one of the silver linings of the pandemic as it allowed all stakeholders to better inform themselves and increase their level of engagement in our governance. We should value and embrace this, not eliminate it.

Thank you,

Rick Tinsley