



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 03/03/2026

ITEM NO: 5

DATE: March 3, 2026
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Chris Constantin, Town Manager
SUBJECT: **Review and Provide Direction on Meeting Minute Format**

RECOMMENDATION: Reaffirm the use of action minutes for all meetings; and modify the current practice for public comment to only identify speakers without summarizing the content of their remarks (for both agenda items and verbal communication).

FISCAL IMPACT:

Adopting the recommended approach is expected to reduce staff time required for preparation and management review of meeting minutes and allow for a more efficient allocation of Town resources. However, there would be no direct budgetary cost associated with implementing the recommendation as the hours of work saved would be reprioritized to other tasks, improving productivity.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

This item does not directly address a Strategic Priority; however, it aligns with the Core Goal of Good Governance.

BACKGROUND:

This item was included in the Policy Committee's approved workplan and was considered at its February 24, 2026, meeting. The Policy Committee and Town Council have discussed the style and format of Council meeting minutes on several occasions, including in 2022, when the use of action minutes was reaffirmed. Action minutes are intended to document official actions taken by the legislative bodies, including motions, votes, and direction to staff, and are not intended to serve as a transcript or detailed narrative of discussion.

PREPARED BY: Wendy Wood
Town Clerk

Reviewed by: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, and Town Attorney

The Town's use of action minutes is supported by the following primary considerations:

1. **Supplemental Verbatim Record:** Complete video recordings of Council meetings are publicly available on YouTube and on the Town's website. Audio recordings of all commission meetings are also available on the Town's website. These recordings serve as the verbatim record of proceedings. While action minutes capture official actions and direction, the video or audio recording is available to any member of the public who wishes to review exactly what was said, ensuring transparency.
2. **Clarity and Transparency:** By focusing on motions, votes, and direction, action minutes improve clarity and transparency on the official actions of the meeting in a clear and concise format, allowing the public to easily identify the decisions of the legislative body.
3. **Statutory Requirements:** State law requires that actions taken and votes be publicly reported. While the Brown Act does not mandate that minutes be prepared, they are typically created to document official actions and ensure compliance with open meeting requirements. There is no requirement to transcribe or summarize oral remarks by Council Members, commissioners, staff, or speakers.
4. **Staff Resource Considerations:** Action minutes are more efficient for capturing the decisions made by the legislative body and require much less time than summary or verbatim minutes. As discussed further in this report, the Town's current practice goes beyond what is typical for action minutes by summarizing public comment. Due to this, preparation of the current minutes requires approximately four to six hours per meeting, plus additional time for management review. A significant portion of this time is devoted to summarizing and reviewing public comment and discussion of motions.

DISCUSSION:

The Town's adopted resolution calls for the use of "action-only" minutes with brief summaries of speakers' comments during public hearing items only, and not for other business items, consent items, or verbal communications. This exceeds what is typically included in action minutes due to the summary of public hearing public comment. In practice, the Town has been summarizing public comments for all agenda items and verbal communications, which exceeds the requirements outlined in the resolution and further exceeds what is typical of action minutes.

The summarization of public comment significantly increases staff preparation time and management review time, introduces greater subjectivity in how comments and discussion are characterized, and does not align with the intent of action minutes.

Staff conducted an informal poll of other cities within Santa Clara County to better understand regional practices regarding meeting minutes. Of the 14 cities all use action minutes and use the following practice:

- Seven cities do not summarize public comment for agenda items and instead list only identify the speakers. (Cupertino, Los Altos, Milpitas, Morgan Hill, San Jose, Santa Clara, and Saratoga)
 - Of these seven, four provide brief summaries for verbal communications (Cupertino, San Jose, Santa Clara, and Saratoga), while the others only identify the speakers (Los Altos, Milpitas, and Morgan Hill).
- Palo Alto does not summarize public comment or list the names of the speakers.
- Monte Sereno and Mountain View identify the speakers and whether they were in favor or opposed to the item.
- The remaining four cities, summarize public comment, most of which are brief. (Campbell, Gilroy, Los Altos Hills, and Sunnyvale)

The survey indicates that the Town's current practice of summarizing public comments for all items is more detailed than the approach than used by a majority of the neighboring cities surveyed.

On February 24, 2026, the Policy Committee reviewed the adopted resolution and current practice and took the following into consideration:

- Alignment between the adopted resolution and current implementation.
- Transparency and accessibility, given the availability of full video or audio recordings as a verbatim supplemental record.
- Consistency with regional practices.
- Staff workload and efficient use of Town resources.
- Clarity, objectivity, and potential risk associated with summarizing public comment.
- Assessment of whether summarizing public comments provides meaningful value to the record.

Based on these considerations, the Committee's review focused on evaluating the current action-minute format and the appropriate level of detail in the minutes. The Policy Committee recommended reaffirming the Town's use of action minutes and modifying the current practice to only identify the public comment speakers, without summarizing their remarks. This approach aligns with the Council's historical direction, reduces staff workload, ensures the minutes remain focused on official actions and decisions, and maintains transparency through publicly available video and audio recordings.

While the 2001 resolution applies specifically to Town Council meetings, the Commission Handbook provides that Boards, Committees, and Commissions utilize action minutes. To ensure consistency in administrative practices across legislative bodies, any modifications would also apply to the Town's boards, committees, and commissions. Should the Council agree with the Committee's recommendation, staff will return with a resolution rescinding the existing resolution and incorporating the modified practice for all legislative bodies.

If more detailed summaries or verbatim minutes for specific meetings or agenda items are desired, Council always retains the ability to direct staff by a majority vote to pursue options such as transcription services or AI-assisted tools.

CONCLUSION:

The Policy Committee recommends reaffirming the Town's use of "action only" minutes and modifying the current practice to only identify public speakers, without summarizing their remarks. If Council proceeds with the recommendation, staff will return with a revised resolution. Staff supports the recommendation as it aligns with the intent of action only minutes, eliminates subjectivity, and increases efficiency in preparing the minutes.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Town Council may consider the following alternatives:

1. **Reaffirm the Resolution for Action-Only Minutes and Change the Current Practice**
Return to action-only minutes that are consistent with the 2001 resolution, which requires only summarizing speaker comments for public hearings. This option would lessen staff workload and reduce the level of detail in the minutes.
2. **Maintain Current Practice**
Continue preparing action minutes that include summarized public comments for agenda and non-agenda items. This option would maintain the existing workload and current level of detail and require a revised resolution.
3. **Expand the Level of Detail in Minutes**
Direct staff to provide more detailed minutes through transcription services. This option would increase staff workload and require additional financial resources.

COORDINATION:

This recommendation was discussed by the Council Policy Committee in coordination with the Town Manager's Office and the Town Attorney.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.

Attachments:

1. Resolution 2001-104