



## CITY OF MILPITAS AGENDA REPORT (AR)

<b>Item Title:</b>	<b>Motion to Reconfirm Findings and Determinations Under Resolution No. 9105 and Assembly Bill 361 for the Continuation of Virtual Meetings</b>
<b>Category:</b>	Consent Calendar-Leadership and Support Services
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	3/1/2022
<b>Staff Contact:</b>	<b>Christopher J. Diaz, City Attorney, (408) 586-3040</b>
<b>Recommendation:</b>	Move to reconfirm findings and determinations under Resolution No. 9105 and Assembly Bill 361 for the continuation of virtual meetings.

### **Background:**

On March 17, 2020, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-29-20 suspending certain provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act in order to allow for local legislative bodies to conduct their meetings completely telephonically or by other electronic means.

The provisions in the Brown Act that were suspended by the Governor's Executive Order are contained at Government Code Section 54953(b)(3) and require that when teleconferencing is used, outside of a statewide emergency, that the following occur:

- An agenda is required to be posted at all locations, including any teleconference locations
- Each teleconference location must be identified on the actual agenda
- Each teleconference location shall be accessible to the public
- A quorum of the legislative body must be in the jurisdiction

With the Governor's Executive Order, the four above requirements were suspended, allowing Councilmembers to not have to post an agenda at their teleconference location, not have to identify their location on the meeting agenda, not have to ensure public accessibility at the teleconference location, and the legislative body did not need a quorum present in the jurisdiction. As the Council is well aware, this allowed all City Council meetings and other meetings of legislative bodies of the City to be conducted by Zoom with councilmembers, commission members, committee members, and staff all joining from remote virtual locations.

The suspension of certain provisions of the Brown Act was further extended by the Governor on June 11, 2021 by the issuance of Executive Order N-08-21 which continued to allow for complete virtual meetings until September 30, 2021.

With the expiration of the Governor's Executive Order and the uncertainty that surrounded the Governor's potential recall, the State Legislature also took the remote meeting issue into its own hands through the adoption of Assembly Bill 361, which is explained in more depth in the Analysis section below.

On October 5, 2021, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 9105, making findings that there is an existing State of Emergency and that state or local officials continue to recommend social distancing measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In particular, the resolution included reference to Cal-OSHA regulation 3205, which

recommends physical distancing in the workplace. By motion and majority vote, the City Council may reconfirm the findings of Resolution No. 9105 and continue to hold virtual meetings pursuant to AB 361.

**Analysis:**

On September 16, 2021, the Governor signed AB 361, which allows legislative bodies to meet virtually provided there is a state of emergency declared by the Governor, and either (1) state or local officials have imposed or recommended measures to promote social distancing; or (2) the legislative body determines by majority vote that meeting in person would present imminent risks to the health and safety of attendees. The Governor by executive order signed on September 20, 2021, suspended the effective date of AB 361 to October 1, 2021. As a result, if the City desires to have virtual meetings on or after October 1, 2021, it must do so consistent with the requirements of AB 361.

AB 361 preserves many of the provisions of the earlier executive orders, including the suspension of the four teleconferencing requirements noted above, while also adding new requirements to the management of remote and teleconference public meetings in order to better achieve the levels of transparency that the Brown Act demands. Specifically, AB 361 imposes two new rules on remote public meetings:

1. Local governments and agencies hosting teleconference meetings in lieu of traditional in-person public meetings must permit direct public comment during the teleconference, and must leave open the opportunity for public comment until the comment period for a given item is closed during the ordinary course of the meeting. The opportunity to make public comment must be of a sufficient duration so as to allow actual public participation.
2. Any action by the governing body during a public teleconference meeting must occur while the agency is actively and successfully broadcasting to members of the public through a call-in option or an internet-based service option. If a technical disruption within the agency's control prevents members of the public from either viewing the meeting of the public agency, or prevents members of the public from offering public comment, the agency must cease all action on the meeting agenda until the disruption ends and the broadcast is restored. Action taken during an agency-caused disruption may be challenged as a violation of the Brown Act.

In order to continue to qualify for AB 361's waiver of in-person meeting requirements, the City Council must, within thirty (30) days of its first meeting under AB 361, and every thirty (30) days thereafter, make findings that (a) state or local officials continue to recommend measures to promote social distancing, or that (b) an in-person meeting would constitute an imminent risk to the safety of attendees.

The above conditions continue to exist at this time, and staff recommends that the City Council by motion reconfirm the findings made in Resolution No. 9105 so that the City Council and all other subordinate legislative bodies may continue to meet virtually.

Lastly, it is important to that AB 361 is optional. If the City Council wishes, it may meet in person. In addition, hybrid meetings are permissible. However, according to City Management, there is not a hybrid option for Commissions, Committees and Task Forces at the City. Thus, regardless of whether the City Council may prefer to meet in person, City Management is recommending that the City Council reconfirm the findings in the resolution to ensure all other Commission, Committee, and Task Force meetings can continue to meet and allow the public to meet remotely without risking public health.

**Policy Alternatives:**

**Alternative 1:** Do not by motion reconfirm the findings made in the resolution making findings and determinations under Assembly Bill 361 for the continuation of virtual meetings.

Pros: None

Cons: Many of the existing Commission, Committee, and Task Force meetings will not be able to meet virtually or through a hybrid format forcing all staff, commission or committee members, and the public to attend meetings in person.

Reason not recommended: The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a global health issue and by forcing commission, committee, and task force meetings to be in person, public health may be put at risk.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The City Council's reconfirmation of the findings made in the resolution to continue with virtual meetings will maintain the status quo and no financial impact is anticipated by the reconfirmation of the findings.

**California Environmental Quality Act:**

The City Council's reconfirmation of the findings made in the resolution is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guideline 15378(b)(5) as it constitutes an organizational or administrative activity of the government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. Further, virtual meetings are likely to reduce certain impacts associated with vehicular travel related to in-person public meetings.

**Recommendation:**

Move to reconfirm findings and determinations under Resolution No.9105 and Assembly Bill 361 for the continuation of virtual meetings

**Attachment**

Resolution 9105