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Staff Report

SS ITEM 3

To: Lemoore City Council
From: Brooke Austin, Executive Secretary 
Date: August 28, 2013
Subject: Telecasting/Webcasting Council Meetings

Discussion:

Council has considered the telecasting/webcasting of City Council Meetings on several occasions. The subject was originally discussed in December 2001 and January 2002. Cost estimates for nearby cities ranged from approximately \$27,000 to over \$50,000. The Council at that time ultimately decided that there were better ways to spend City funds and that the majority of citizens preferred the City newsletter as the primary notification of City business.

The idea was brought to Council again in June of 2010 at the request of Council Member Siegel. Staff surveyed sixteen cities and counties and of the seven respondents, the costs ranged from \$4,800 to \$16,800 per year, not including initial startup costs. The Council at that time directed staff not to pursue telecasting City Council Meetings due to initial and ongoing cost concerns.

Due to requests from community members, Mayor Siegel has requested that Council consider this matter again. Staff surveyed other California cities and discovered that most local area cities do not broadcast meetings. However, thirty-four other cities that do broadcast meetings responded and the annual cost varied greatly from \$1,600 to \$26,000, not including initial startup costs. Many cities report using the Granicus Program, while others use in-house staff or a local videographer to record the meetings and then broadcast them through Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) Access Channels.

During the 2010 discussion, staff had difficulty getting a response from Comcast. However, under the Digital Infrastructure and Video Competition Act of 2006 (DIVCA), the cable company is required to pay the City 5% of its gross revenue for unrestricted use in the General Fund. Furthermore, the City can request up to an additional 1% to be used exclusively for PEG access and a City cable channel be established to broadcast government programming to the residents of Lemoore.

If Council desires to request the additional 1% for PEG access, the City Attorney should pass the request on to the cable operator. Once the City begins to receive funds, it can begin to purchase the equipment necessary to broadcast the meetings.

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It is important to note that the cable company may recover the amount of any fee under this section by billing a recovery fee as a separate line item on the regular bill of each subscriber. Comcast generally passes this fee on to the consumer, which results in an average increase of 80 cents per month to the bill of each subscriber.

As mentioned, some cities use Granicus to assist with the streaming of meetings. Earlier this year when the City discussed changing to electronic agenda packets, staff researched the cost of Granicus programs. Granicus' Government Transparency Suite, which allows for the streaming of meetings, had an estimated upfront cost of \$2,600, plus an ongoing monthly hosting fee of approximately \$200. This would be in addition to any equipment needed for the actual recording.

The City of Coalinga uses local videographer Glenn Mitchell of VidComm to record their Council Meetings, which are then broadcast on the local PEG channel. He charges \$400 per month for one meeting or \$600 per month for two meetings. In 2002, Mr. Mitchell offered the same service to the City of Lemoore for a slightly higher fee, plus startup costs. Staff contacted Mr. Mitchell and he is still willing to record Lemoore City Council Meetings. In addition to recording meetings and providing a DVD that can be supplied to the local cable company, he provides an archival DVD of the meeting to both the City and the local library. He has agreed to perform the services based on an annual contract. Due to the fact that the contract would exceed \$2,500, it would be necessary to use the open market procedure and obtain three bids or quotes for services and to award to the lowest responsible bidder.

The staff reports and minutes for previous Council consideration of this topic are attached for your review.

Budget Impact:

Unknown at this time.

Recommendation:

None, Council discussion only.