



## CITY OF PALO ALTO OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

August 31, 2015

The Honorable City Council  
Palo Alto, California

### **Adoption of a Revised Ordinance Amending Section 2.040.160 (City Council Minutes) of Chapter 2.04 (Council Organization and Procedure) of the Palo Alto Municipal Code to Require Action Minutes and a Verbatim Transcript of all Council and Council Standing Committee Meetings, and Delete the Requirement for Sense Minutes**

#### **Recommendation**

Adopt the attached revised Ordinance (Attachment A) amending Municipal Code Section 2.040.160 - City Council Minutes to require action minutes and a verbatim transcript of all Council and Council Standing Committee meetings, and delete the requirement for sense minutes.

#### **Background and Discussion**

On May 6, 2015 the City Council discussed the recommendation from the Policy and Services Committee to move to Action Minutes and the video of Council and Council Standing Committee meetings as the official record of those meetings. The Council endorsed the recommendation and added an additional requirement that Verbatim minutes be prepared and made digitally available to the public, with hardcopies provided on request. At the May 6, 2015 meeting, Council directed staff to return to Council on consent with an ordinance amending Municipal Code Section 2.040.160 reflecting these changes.

Since the May meeting, the Clerk's Office has been preparing Verbatim transcriptions. In reviewing the length of time it takes to prepare the transcripts, Verbatim minutes are averaging 4 hours of transcription time per each hour of meeting. Sense minutes were averaging 3 hours transcription time per each hour of meeting. This has increased costs by \$33.00 per hour, or for a 5 hour meeting we are spending an additional \$165.00. As an example, the June 15, 2015 Council meeting lasted for 7 hours and 52 minutes, there are 144 pages of Verbatim transcription and the cost to transcribe that meeting is \$1,043.00.

Staff continues to do a cursory review of the transcriptions to insure that names are spelled correctly, acronyms are correct, and any formatting issues are addressed. In addition, where the transcriptionist states that something was "inaudible", the Clerk's Office staff listens to the tape to see if we can capture what was being said.

On August 17, 2015 Staff brought a proposed Ordinance changing the official meeting minutes from Sense Minutes to Action Minutes. Council requested a change to the Ordinance in that the City Clerk will agendize the Action Minutes for Council approval. A revised Ordinance reflecting that change is before the Council for approval as Attachment A.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Attachment A: Revised Ordinance Amending Section 2.040.160 (City Council Minutes) (PDF)

Department Head: Beth Minor, City Clerk

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ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Ordinance of the Council of the City of Palo Alto Amending Section 2.040.160 (City Council Minutes) of Chapter 2.04 (Council Organization and Procedure) of the Palo Alto Municipal Code to Require Action Minutes and a Verbatim Transcript of all Council and Council Standing Committee Meetings, and Delete the Requirement for Sense Minutes

The Council of the City of Palo Alto does ORDAIN as follows:

SECTION 1. Findings and Declarations. The City Council finds and declares as follows:

A. On May 6, 2015 the City Council discussed the recommendation from the Policy and Services Committee to move to action minutes and the video of Council and Council Standing Committee meetings as the official record of those meetings. The purpose of this change is to increase the accuracy and decrease the time and cost of preparing the Council's official record of action. The Council endorsed the Committee's recommendation and added an additional requirement that verbatim minutes be prepared and made digitally available to the public, with hardcopies provided on request.

B. Action minutes are to be approved by Council in "real time" during the meeting, as Council motions are transcribed, projected for viewing by the Council and the public, and adopted, rejected or amended by Council.

SECTION 2. Section 2.04.160 (City Council Minutes) of Chapter 2.04 (Council Organization and Procedure) of the Palo Alto Municipal Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

**2.04.160 City council minutes.**

(a) The minutes of the council shall be kept by the city clerk. The minutes shall be neatly typewritten or printed in a book kept for that purpose, with a record of each particular type of business transacted set off in paragraphs, with proper subheadings.

(b) The minutes shall include a record of all business discussed and all actions taken at regular or special meetings of the council. The minutes shall be sense action minutes. As soon as possible after each council meeting, the city clerk shall post draft action minutes on the City's website and transmit a copy to each council member, and need not be a verbatim transcript of the proceedings. Sense minutes include all actions taken and a short synopsis of the remarks of such council members, staff and members of the public as speak upon a particular matter under discussion. A record shall be made of the names and addresses of persons addressing the council, together with a brief summary of their remarks indicating whether they spoke in support of or in opposition to such matter. Nothing in this section shall be construed to compel registration as a condition to attendance at a meeting.

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(c) A verbatim transcript of the proceedings shall also be prepared. As soon as possible after each council meeting the city clerk shall cause a copy of the minutes to be forwarded to each council member, the city manager, other officers and department heads of the city, all newspapers of general circulation within the city, and be made available to the public at the front counter in the city clerk's office, the table and bulletin board in the council chambers, and all city libraries, except the Children's Library, the verbatim transcript shall be made publicly available digitally and hard copies available upon request.

(d) At the meeting following ~~publication~~ posting of the draft action minutes, council minutes shall be agendized by the city clerk for the council's approval. Corrections to the minutes shall be made at the meeting. Council members may submit their corrections in writing or orally to the city clerk's office before the time of the meeting. The city clerk shall distribute a written copy of all corrections received during regular business hours to all council members at the meeting.

SECTION 3. Severability. If any provision, clause, sentence or paragraph of this ordinance, or the application to any person or circumstances, shall be held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the other provisions of this Ordinance which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application and, to this end, the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby declared to be severable.

SECTION 4. The Council finds that this project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), pursuant to Section 15061 of the CEQA Guidelines, because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the ordinance will have a significant effect on the environment.

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SECTION 5. This ordinance shall be effective on the thirty-first day after the date of its adoption.

INTRODUCED:

PASSED:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Attorney

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Manager