



CITY COUNCIL

Darryl Moore
Councilmember District 2

CONSENT CALENDAR
October 23, 2007

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmembers Darryl Moore and Gordon Wozniak

Subject: Support Teleconferencing for Commissions

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the City Manager to explore the possibility for requests for teleconferencing by commission or task force chairperson when members have a good reason that they are unable to attend meetings in person and for the City Manager to return with a proposal on December 18, 2007.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

None.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Currently, a commissioner who is unable to attend a meeting of the body they are appointed to must either request a leave of absence or be counted as absent. The City requirements for teleconferencing are onerous. First, city policy requires a commissioner to receive approval from Council, which is a two-month turnaround for the secretary of a commission, and a lot of work. The commissioner must then open the place of teleconferencing to the public and post an agenda.

BACKGROUND

Often a commissioner is unable to physically attend a Commission meeting (due to illness, a sick child, or being out of town), but could participate via teleconferencing. Currently, teleconferencing requires Council approval and over two months of lead-time. Thus, we request that the Council adopt a policy allowing Commission/Task Force chairs the discretion to approve requests for teleconferencing, for commissioners unable to attend meetings in person, for good reason.

Teleconferencing has both advantages and disadvantages for communication. One advantage is providing an environmentally friendly activity, which will become the normal way of conducting business in the future, even civil service business.

Any meeting is best conducted with all parties physically in attendance. Speakers, handouts, presentations and eye contact are less effective in teleconferencing. But, in

many cases, ill health, travel or even taking care of sick dependents makes teleconferencing an attractive alternative.

Most commissions of the City have basic audio teleconferencing equipment. Such equipment can be used successfully in a meeting with a little patience and discipline. With advances in technology, teleconferencing will develop into affordable and dependable audio-visual technology.

The City Of Berkeley is an environmental leader and should support and facilitate innovative environmental activities. For this reason, we should encourage the use of whatever teleconferencing equipment is available to us for this purpose and rescind the need for council approval if the request is made for good reason.

Good reason to request teleconferencing is any of the following: unavoidable travel plans, care of dependents, physical conditions that would stop travel to the place of the meeting, etc.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Teleconferencing is environmentally preferable to activity and is convenient for people unable to attend a commission or taskforce meeting.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Continue with current policy to request council approval was considered to be onerous on the volunteer commissioner and time consuming for staff to implement.

CONTACT PERSON

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