



Legislation Text

File #: 15-383, **Version:** 1

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SUBJECT: Confirmation of the Use of Action Minutes as the Official Record of City Council

REPORT IN BRIEF

Considers the confirmation of action minutes as the official record of City Council for regular meetings and brief summary minutes for meetings such as town halls and budget sessions where Council policy direction may be given but no official actions are taken.

RECOMMENDATION

City Council - Adopt a motion confirming action minutes as the official record of City Council for regular meetings and brief summary minutes for City Council meetings when no official actions are taken; and, adding section C-5 City Council Minutes to the City Council Administrative Policies.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Confirmation of action minutes by City Council; or,
2. Approve subject to amendments (specified in motion); or,
3. Continue to a future meeting; or,
4. Deny

AUTHORITY

City of Merced Charter, Section 200.

CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Government transparency.

DISCUSSION

At their meeting of October 19, 2015, Council discussed the current format of minutes provided by the City Clerk's office. At that time, Council expressed an interest in the final decision of the City Clerks Association of California when it had been reached.

The City Clerks Association of California (CCAC) has published its Guidelines for Preparing Minutes and has recommended municipalities consider adopting these guidelines that call for either brief summary or action style minutes. Attached is a chart describing the features and benefits of both brief summary and action style minutes.

Presently, the City uses long-form summary style minutes, as opposed to brief summary or action minutes. Long-form summary minutes provide a very detailed account of the meeting, covering major

points, speaker comments (both legislative body and public), and the flow of the discussion. In past years, these types of minutes have served a necessary purpose, since the public had limited access to live streaming, video/audio recordings, and electronic copies of agenda reports and supporting materials. Today the majority of the City's public records requests related to legislative body meetings are for recordings, electronic copies of supporting documents, and occasionally minute excerpts. Few requests are received for the official minutes.

Most California cities have transitioned from long-form minutes to either brief summary or action minutes as the most efficient, succinct, and cost-effective manner for preparing a record of City Council action. Auditors, judicial officers, the public, and other stakeholders rely on minutes to accurately reflect the final decisions of the governing body. Transitioning to brief summary or action style minutes removes the ambiguity and misdirection that is unintentionally created by long-form minutes when the flow of the conversation is included in the written record.

In case of someone wishing to review the discussion leading up to the Council's final decision, audio/video recordings of the Council's proceedings, as well as agenda packets are maintained pursuant to the City's records retention policy.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

Streamlining to brief summary or action minutes reduces the amount of staff time spent in minute preparation. Other cities that have made the transition are spending 50 to 75 percent less time in transcribing and preparing minutes. This would allow the Clerk's Office to bring past minutes for approval in a timelier manner. Another cost savings is a reduction in materials (pages, books) used for preserving archival minutes.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Features and Benefits of Action and Summary Minutes
2. CCAC Guidelines for Preparing Minutes
3. City Council Administrative Policy C-5.