



TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Jannette Goodall, City Clerk *JG*
RE: Response to Resolution No. 20190207-031
DATE: May 28, 2019

On February 7, 2019, the Austin City Council approved Resolution No. 20190207-031 asking staff to report back on best practices with options for timely, immediately visible (or audible), transparent, and efficient voting procedures to be used in Council Chamber including electronic voting, archiving recorded votes and fiscal implications of the options.

The attached document (Exhibit A) details the types of voting methods, creation of a searchable voting history, additional enhancements to the speaker sign-up system and implementation of an interactive display board in the Lobby that would assist residents to track the number of speakers for an item and where they are in the list of speakers.

In researching best practices for voting methods, staff benchmarked the following Cities:

- San Antonio, Texas
- Dallas, Texas
- Fort Worth, Texas
- El Paso, Texas
- Seattle, Washington
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Charlotte, North Carolina
- Phoenix, Arizona
- Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Below is a summary of the cities benchmarked and information on if they are currently using an electronic voting system and/or maintain a voting history.

	Voting System	Voting History	System Used	Voting History websites	Comments
San Antonio, Texas	Yes	Yes	Electronic Voting: Voting History: Custom in-house system Starting in July/August: Granicus Votecast		Voting system is not used to generate the voting history. Both systems require a FTE to operate the equipment in Chambers.
Dallas, Texas	Yes	Yes	Electronic Voting: Voting History: Custom in-house system	https://www.dallasopendata.com/Government/Dallas-City-Council-Voting-Record/ts5d-gdq6/data	Voting system is not used to generate the voting history and they use the voting system only for "record votes".
Fort Worth, Texas	Yes	No	Currently: Crestron Starting in August: Granicus Votecast		Current system does not retain the votes, motion or amendments. Currently the Mayor operates the system but with the new system, an additional staff member from the Clerk's Office will be required.
El Paso, Texas	Yes	No	Electronic Voting: Crestron (Looking to replace)		They are experiencing issues and occasionally have to rely on hand/voice. Looking to replace Crestron.
Seattle, Washington	No	No			
Minneapolis, Minnesota	Yes	Yes	Custom system: LIMS System	http://lms.minneapolismn.gov/Reports/VotingRecord	Custom agenda management and voting history system.
Charlotte, North Carolina	No	No			
Phoenix, Arizona	No	No			
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	Yes	No	Current system PrimeGov but switching to Crestron.		Their current system does not display the vote

VOTING METHODS

There are four voting options available: hand, audible, roll call or the use of an electronic voting system.

1. Show of Hands:

The show of hands is the method currently used by Council with the exception of budget adoption items. The method involves the Mayor asking for a show of hands for each member voting for or against the item. Followed by the Mayor summarizing the vote.

The advantages of this method are: it is simple, quick and has no fiscal impact. The disadvantage of this method is if members do not leave their hands up or clearly raise their hands it can be difficult for both the Mayor, staff and the public to see and record the vote.

A simple option for improving this method would be for each member voting in support of the item to raise their hand and keeps their hand raised until Mayor acknowledges their vote. That process is repeated by the Mayor for members voting against the item. Then if needed, the Mayor would call for anyone abstaining on the vote. The Mayor would summarize the final vote including those who are voting in support and against the item, those who are off the dais, absent or abstaining. The advantage is that the vote would be visible during the casting of the vote and clearly captured on the video recording of the meeting. A disadvantage of this may be that it may result in additional time involved in casting the votes.

Additionally, for any vote that is not unanimous, the Clerk's staff can include the vote on the "Actions taken by the City Council during this meeting" page which is posted in real time on the Council Meeting and Information Center webpage.

Fiscal Impact: None

2. Audible:

The audible voting method has occasionally been used by Council and involves each member verbally stating their vote. The method involves the Mayor asking for a show of hands for each member voting in support or against the item. Followed by the Mayor summarizing the vote by announcing those who voted in support of the item, against the item, abstained or were off the dais.

The advantages of this method are: it is simple, quick and has no fiscal impact. The disadvantage of this method is that it can be difficult to hear the individual votes.

An option for improvement on this method can be for each Member to voice their vote individually when called upon by the Mayor. Followed by the Mayor summarizing the final vote including reading into the record the names of council members abstaining, off the dais or absent. The advantage is that the vote would be summarized for Council, staff and the public following the casting of the vote and clearly captured on the video recording of the

meeting. The disadvantage of this may be that it may results in additional time involved in casting the votes.

Additionally, for any vote that is not unanimous, the Clerk's staff can include the vote on the "Actions taken by the City Council during this meeting" page which is posted in real time on the Council Meeting and Information Center webpage.

Fiscal Impact: None

3. Roll Call:

A formal roll call vote is a method used by Council during budget adoption and involves the Clerk reading each individual member's name and the member verbally casting their vote. The advantage is that the vote would be clearly captured and summarized on the video recording of the meeting. The disadvantage of this method is it may result in additional time involved in casting the votes.

In addition, for any vote that is not unanimous, the Clerk's staff could include the vote on the "Actions taken by the City Council during this meeting" page which is posted in real time on the Council Meeting and Information Center webpage.

Fiscal Impact: None

4. Electronic Voting:

An "electronic voting" system that would allow each member to electronically cast their vote with the vote being visually displayed on a screen or television monitor. There are systems available that can either be integrated with the agenda management system to a simple display board that visually shows a different colored light for the vote cast. The advantages and costs of the systems will be based on the features selected.

The advantage of an electronic voting system if used to its fullest capability include:

- Streamlining a meeting by allowing members to make a motion, second a motion and cast votes electronically.
- It will display the vote on a screen.
- It may be used to create minutes and a voting history.

The disadvantages of an electronic voting system are:

- Costs for implementation and on-going maintenance.
- Customization or the lack of flexibility with Council Rules or customs. An example is: Currently when voting on the "consent agenda", Council Members verbally indicate they wish to be shown voting "no" or "abstaining" on an individual item without pulling that item from consent. That would not be an option, any item on consent that is not being adopted by a unanimous vote would have to be pulled and voted on individually.

- An electronic voting system will require an additional staff person from the Clerk's Office to attend the meeting to operate and maintain the system.
- The system will require reconfiguration every six months when Council switches seats.
- If the system is used for voting on both the item and the amendments, the number of amendments that are made may make it difficult in the system to distinguish between votes without having the amendments in advance to be preloaded in the system.
- It may require customization to be able to handle meetings within meetings such as Austin Housing Finance Corporation meetings.
- System issues resulting in downtime during a meeting.

Fiscal Impact: \$50,000+ depending on the need to change out the existing consoles on the dais for Council Members; the amount of customization required to accommodate Council Rules and preferences; and to create or customize the system to create a voting history.

OPTIONS FOR THE CREATION OF A SEARCHABLE VOTING HISTORY

Option 1: Use of an "Electronic Voting" System to create a downloadable, searchable database.

Of the Cities benchmarked, none of the cities who currently use an electronic voting system use it to create a downloadable, searchable voting history. The voting systems have the options for creating voting histories but the information included may be limited or require customization. Customizing the voting system to create a voting history that includes Council's preferred data fields could increase the costs of an electronic voting system.

Fiscal Impact: The fiscal impact would be tied to the cost for an electronic voting system and would be dependent on the amount of customization needed.

Option 2: Creation of an in-house system.

The Office of the City Clerk believes existing staff can create a custom in-house system with assistance from the Communications and Technology Management Department and managed with existing resources within the Clerk's Office that will allow individuals to download and/or search the voting history of individual Council Members. This would allow the City to customize the database to include any fields requested by Council, insert a link to the executed document if available, and design the web interface.

Fiscal Impact: The fiscal impact is existing staff resources; no other fiscal impact is expected.

SPEAKER SIGN-UP AND LOBBY DISPLAY SCREENS

Speaker Sign-up Enhancements

The Office of the City Clerk with assistance from the Communications and Technology Management Department are looking at additional enhancements to the existing Speaker Sign-Up System. Examples of some of the enhancements include:

- Allow the user to enter a mobile telephone number or email address to receive a confirmation listing the items they registered to speak on. This will reduce the number of duplicate registrations.
- Redesign the look of the screens for when users are donating time to another speaker, it will reduce the number of duplicate registrations by allowing the system to inform the user that the individual they wish to donate time has received the maximum allotted amount of time donated.

Fiscal Impact: At this time we do not see a fiscal impact, however at some point in time the Speaker Sign-up System will need to be redesigned in a program language that is supported long-term by the City.

Interactive Display

The implementation of a large high resolution video wall that can be used to televise Council Meetings as well as display PowerPoint presentations for press conferences or other meetings held in City Hall. This video wall would be located in the atrium between the television monitors currently located on the East wall, south of the entrance to the Clerk's Office. This will allow the two television monitors currently located on this wall to be changed out for interactive displays to securely display the public view of the Speaker Sign-up System allowing residents to see who has registered, who has time donated and where they fall within the list of speakers.

Fiscal Impact: \$295,000.00 which includes installation, construction costs, and maintenance.