

American River Flood Control District

Audio Recording Board Meetings

Staff Report

Discussion:

A request was made by the Board of Trustees that District staff provide a report on audio recording of District Board meetings. The District currently has a practice of generating and adopting minutes for each Board meeting. District archives contain all minutes dating back to the District's inception in 1928. The practice of creating audio recordings of District Board meetings is assumed to be made in addition to the current practice of adopting formal minutes.

District staff initially contacted other Districts within the California Special District Association's network of administrative staff and researched how other Districts currently record meetings. The results ranged from a District that merely records the meeting to assist in the development of minutes and then deletes the recording to a District that contracts with an audio technology firm for its services. These services include installation of recording and mixing equipment and installation of a software package to manage the recording data and transcribe the recordings into minutes. This more rigorous approach included the following costs:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------|
| 1. Equipment | \$1,195 |
| 2. Set-up and Training | \$1,495 |
| 3. Software | \$2,495 |
| 4. Technical Support | \$ 425 |

For a total price of \$5,610

District staff then looked into a more small-scale solution to obtain legible recordings that could be linked on the District web page. Numerous companies make digital voice recorders designed for recording meetings and lectures. Staff investigated the standard features on the most popular devices and found that the local Best Buy had a suitable model in stock for \$55.

Staff made test recordings in the District Board room with the digital voice recorder in the center of the room and found voices from all corners of the room could be heard clearly on the recording. Staff put the sample recording on the District website with the associated meeting materials and successfully downloaded the file from a remote computer. Storage and file size may become an issue with this approach as a 5-minute recording created a 7-megabyte file. A one-hour meeting could be as much as 80 megabytes to download but staff has not performed that test sample yet.

It appears that audio recording could be successfully accomplished with the small-scale method using the digital voice recorder. This would not replace the formally adopted minutes but would supplement them and allow a different means for the public to gain an understanding of District operations.

Some issues and concerns may need to be considered prior to starting this recording practice:

- Once this begins, is it a 'pilot program' or does it need to continue in perpetuity?
- Do we need to notify guests and the public that a recording is taking place?
- Do we need to reference or explain meeting materials or visual aids for the listening public?
- Will we at some time need to make accommodations for the hearing impaired?
- Do we host the audio files on our website for a limited time or in perpetuity?

Recommendation:

The General Manager recommends that the Board of Trustees implement a pilot program to perform audio recording of Board meetings for a period of 6-months and then reassess if the effort is accomplishing the intended goal.