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## OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

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# REPORT

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### REPORT TO THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

DATE: MARCH 5, 2003

REPORT NO.: 03-02

SUBJECT: ANALYSIS OF COSTS SAVINGS IF THE NUMBER OF  
COUNCIL MEETINGS WERE REDUCED

#### ISSUE

At the City Council meeting of February 24, in conjunction with the Mid-Year Financial Status Report, the City Manager was directed to provide an analysis of cost savings if the number of City Council meetings were reduced. Since Council support is provided by the City Clerk's Office, we are responding to that part of the request.

Before addressing cost savings associated with a reduction in the number of City Council meetings, I would like to make note that the City Clerk's Office has taken a 3% cut this fiscal year in response to lower local revenues. We have also identified an additional 4% in costs savings for the remainder of the fiscal year in case there is a shortfall in revenue from the state. These savings have come primarily from not filling vacancies in the office, although some has come from deferring technology projects. We have limited hiring to critical positions and we have discontinued some non-essential services like the electronic speaker slip distribution during City Council meetings.

For Fiscal Year 04, we have submitted an incremental savings plan of up to 8% in case revenues fall short of expectations or state revenue is reduced. Again, most of these savings are the result of anticipated vacancies or from delays in hiring. We are also prepared to discuss programmatic cuts should that be needed.

#### DISCUSSION

Costs associated with Council meetings include preparation of the docket, including appropriate noticing of land use items, and recording and processing of the Council actions. Additional costs include staff support at Council meetings, food, off-site rentals with associated costs, and interpretation services on occasion.

### Docket Preparation

The Clerk's Docket Section prepares and distributes the Council Docket and exhibit materials in compliance with legal deadlines and also uploads the docket to the Internet for public access. Preparation time for the docket is significant and is usually done under tight deadlines. While the official deadline for docket materials is Wednesday at 2 p.m. for the docket 12 days later, we frequently get information later than that. Docket entries are created from the ordinances and resolutions associated with the item. If there is a 1472 A page, it is scanned for inclusion. While the scanning has eliminated typing of this information, it must still be proofed and corrected. Items received after the docket goes for printing on Monday afternoon, are processed separately and appear as supplementals. The docket staff also copy and distribute back up material, provide set up for Council meetings and provide refreshments for the City Council members and their staff. They also arrange for dinner when City Council meetings go into the evening.

Docket costs have been reduced over the past several fiscal years by making it available on-line and reducing the number of dockets and exhibit packages distributed to City staff. The cost of printing has increased over the past year, however, and the cost of publishing a weekly docket with supplements still averages \$3,000 per week. Unless the docket itself were significantly reconfigured and simplified to reduce size and preparation time, we do not believe that fewer Council meetings would significantly reduce the workload or the cost of publishing dockets and supplements. While the section has slow periods preceding a legislative recess, it is our experience that when there is a significant legislative break, the dockets both before and after the break are significantly larger because there are still the same number of items to be addressed by Council and fewer opportunities to do so. While a legislative recess of one week does not significantly impact docket size, a more lengthy recess often results in overtime costs since the docket is larger, there is still a very limited time to prepare and items still arrive late.

### Recording and Processing of Council Actions

The bulk of the City Clerk Legislative Recorders' time is spent processing the items from the Council meetings. Minutes are created and posted to the Internet and Council actions are processed. With fewer Council meetings, but the same number of items, the cost associated with the Council Actions Section would actually increase. Meetings would be likely to run longer since the Council Docket for each meeting would be larger. The Legislative Recorder covering the meeting would have to be paid overtime, and two Legislative Recorders would likely have to be assigned to handle the processing to get information out in a timely manner.

### Staff Support, Food and Off-Site Meeting Costs

In addition to the Legislative Recorders, City Council meetings are attended by the City Clerk or the Assistant City Clerk. Some additional staff attend meetings for a limited amount of time to assist with speaker slips. Because of staff vacancies, the number of individuals at the Council meetings has been reduced, and some nonessential functions have been eliminated. For example, the electronic distribution of speaker slip

information has been discontinued until the Office of the City Clerk can be fully staffed. While fewer City Council meetings would free up time for administrative work and other departmental duties, it would not result in any cost savings.

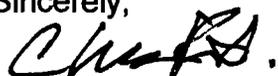
The average cost for snacks and beverages for Council meetings is \$80 per meeting. When meetings go into the evening there are additional costs for dinner which average \$275 per meeting. These costs would not necessarily be reduced if there were fewer Council meetings, since there is a much larger cost associated with providing dinner when meetings run late. If there were fewer meetings, but the same number of items, thus larger dockets, it is likely that there would be a significant increase in the number of meetings that would run late, and thus, the potential for even greater costs associated with Council meeting support.

Off-site evening meetings are more expensive than those held in the City Council Chambers because of set up requirements, the cost of dinner and the cost of overtime for staff. Facilities must be visited in advance and assessed for suitability and ADA compliance. Most recently, special phone lines have had to be installed to meet ADA requests. Large meetings held at the concourse are even more expensive. A recent meeting on Inclusionary Housing held at Plaza Hall cost \$6,000 for hall rental, a phone line, interpreter equipment and an interpreter.

#### SUMMARY

In summary, fewer meetings would not result in budget savings. In fact, as long as the number of items remains relatively stable, fewer meetings would most likely create additional costs due to overtime, meal requirements and docket costs. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact me or Assistant City Clerk, Joyce Lane at 533-4081.

Sincerely,



Charles G. Abdelnour  
City Clerk