

EL DORADO LAFCO

LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

AGENDA OF SEPTEMBER 26, 2007

REGULAR MEETING

TO: Ted Long, Chairman, and
Members of the El Dorado County Local Agency Formation
Commission

FROM: José C. Henríquez, Executive Officer

AGENDA ITEM #7: **CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF A RETENTION
POLICY FOR AUDIO RECORDINGS OF COMMISSION
MEETINGS**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission adopt the preferred option(s) on the retention of audio recordings of public meetings.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDED ACTION

At the August 22, 2007 the Commission was reluctant to adopt staff's recommendation at the time to destroy audio recording of meetings after a certain amount of time. The Commission directed staff to return with other options for retaining the audio recordings.

BACKGROUND

When the Commission considered the adoption of a more comprehensive Records Retention Policy at the last meeting, staff recommended the destruction of audio tapes of Commission meetings for three reasons:

- It believed that the adopted minutes and staff reports created a sufficient record of proceedings for future reference
- Audio recordings, which are not adopted by the Commission, competed against the Commission-adopted minutes as the official record of the Commission's proceedings.
- Audio tapes, the current recording format, take up a significant amount of storage space.

To that end, staff recommended that the Commission adopt a provision to destroy or discard the recordings in the comprehensive Records Retention Policy. The applicable section under said read:

2.8.1.1 Meeting Minutes

- Hard copy – *Permanent (GC 34090)*
May be imaged for **permanent records retention** after two (2) years
- Audio tapes – *May be destroyed thirty (30) days after Commission adoption of Minutes*

During its discussion on the matter, the Commission was reluctant to discard the audio recordings, especially in light that it had adopted staff other recommendation to switch from the summary minutes format to the action minutes format. The Commission directed staff to return this item for further discussion. In addition, it wanted staff to research the costs of converting the current already-recorded tapes into CDs or other media to assist with storage. The results of the research will be discussed later in this report.

Audio Records Policy

In order to address the reasons/concerns outlined above, staff identified three options for the Commission to consider regarding audio recordings:

1. Discard the recordings after an appropriate amount of time – The staff recommendation was covered last month and briefly summarized above. If this is the preferred option, the policy to consider and adopt would be the same as Policy 2.8.1.1 above, except that the term “Audio tapes” should be replaced with the term “Audio recordings.” The Commission has the discretion to alter the length of time that the recording will be retained.
2. Adopt the recordings and the minutes as the official record of the proceedings – With this option, the Commission considers the audio recordings to have the same weight as the minutes. From a logistics standpoint, it may be necessary for the Commission to hear the recordings in order to ensure it is comfortable that the recordings are an adequate record, similar to how the Commission reviews the draft version of the minutes. If this is the preferred option, the policy to consider and adopt would be:

2.8.1.1 Meeting Minutes

- Hard copy – *Permanent (GC 34090)*
May be imaged for **permanent records retention** after two (2) years
- Audio recordings – *Permanent (GC 34090)*
Will be retained and appended to the adopted Minutes as the official record of proceedings

3. Retain the audio recordings for historical purposes – The recordings are kept permanently but the Commission considers its policy to be that the adopted minutes are the official record of the proceedings. As such, the recordings are retained permanently but would not hold any official status or be subject to Commission review or adoption. If this is the preferred option, the policy to consider and adopt would be:

2.8.1.1 Meeting Minutes

- Hard copy – *Permanent (GC 34090)*

May be imaged for **permanent records retention** after two (2) years

- Audio recordings – *Permanent (GC 34090)*

The audio recordings are retained as **permanent records** and for historical purposes; however the adopted Minutes are considered the official record of proceedings

Staff continues to recommend Option #1, but if the Commission still has concerns over this option and does not wish to adopt it, then staff recommends that the Commission consider Option #3. It is easier to implement logistically and addresses the concern about the recordings' status vis-à-vis the adopted minutes.

Conversion of Audio Recordings

This topic concerns what to do with the multiple audio cassette recordings from current and past Commission meetings. Staff has found at least one box at the County Records Center full of cassettes dating back to the early 1990s. There is also at least one shelf full of other tapes at the LAFCO office. Staff is concerned about the amount of space storing these cassettes and questions their value since the quality of audio recordings in cassette format deteriorates over time.

During the August meeting, Commissioner Cooper proposed converting the cassettes to CDs or other media that makes the storage of these recordings easier. The Commission directed staff to research the feasibility to implement Commissioner Cooper's suggestion. If the Commission adopts Option #1, then there would be no need to discuss the conversion further since the tapes would be discarded. However, if the Commission adopts Options #2 or 3, the Commission should provide staff with direction on its preference.

Conversion of Existing Tapes

There are few avenues to convert audio cassettes into CDs or another media. Only two vendors in the Placerville area have the capacity and equipment for such conversions. The quotes obtained by staff are:

- Kings Music Service (local) - \$0.40 per continuous minute
- Millennia Media (local) - \$80-90 per CD
- Family Memories Video (online) - \$1.00 per minute
- Singapore Video Conversion (online) - \$12 per hour
- Sonic Perfectionist (online) - \$18.95 per hour of recorded material

A second option would be for staff to purchase the necessary equipment and convert the tapes in-house. The estimated equipment and software costs run from \$12 to \$500. The costs of converting the tapes would also have to take into account the staff time expended on such a project, although it is likely that staff time can be kept to a bare minimum.

The third option would not to convert all of the existing cassettes. Instead, only a select number of tapes would be converted, be it only select meetings or all of the meetings going back a few years. The remainder is left in their current cassette format. It may prove to be still costly to outsource but it may end up being more cost effective in the long run: Converting only a small number of tapes may not justify the cost of purchasing the equipment if it is to be done in-house.

Audio Recordings From This Point Forward

Currently the Commission utilizes the Planning Commission/Traffic Court Hearing Room, which is only equipped to make audio recordings in cassette format. Barring a switch to another meeting room with CD-recording equipment, the Commission may wish to consider another option in order to stop the recurring cost of converting tapes. There is equipment that digitally records onto a flash drive. This recording essentially becomes another computer file that can be downloaded onto a free-standing hard drive, computer or a server. At that point the information can be burned onto a CD or retained as a file. The equipment costs are estimated to be \$200 to \$699.