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## **INFORMAL STAFF REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

### **SUBJECT:**

Provide a response to a Two-Minute Pitch request for remote commissioner participation at Planning and Zoning Commission meetings.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Denton Television (DTV), a division of the Marketing and Communications Department, has five full-time staff members responsible for development, production, and distribution of multi-media programming to meet the goals and objectives of the City's strategic and communications plans. DTV oversees all televised board and commission meetings, either through in-house staff or a third-party contractor. In addition to meeting production, DTV manages a YouTube channel and provides video content for the City's social media platforms.

The City of Denton televises 11 board and commission meetings, including the City Council. Four are produced by DTV staff and seven are produced by the City's third-party contractor, Swagit. Remote meeting participation is not available through Swagit. Currently, remote meeting participation is limited to City Council meetings exclusively.

### **DISCUSSION:**

To maintain consistency and avoid setting a broader precedent, the City has limited remote participation to City Council meetings. Although Zoom is a standard communication tool, integrating it with the City's existing production infrastructure—which includes 12 live microphones and a multi-camera setup—presents technical challenges. Key production elements, such as audio quality, camera angles, and in-room screen visuals, are critical and require careful coordination.

During meetings, DTV staff monitor the live signal across the City's website and three cable providers to ensure reliability. The most intricate challenge of incorporating remote participation is maintaining high-quality audio. The City utilizes an Audio over Ethernet (AoE) routing matrix to manage live microphones in the Council Work Session Room and Council Chamber. While AoE provides high-quality audio transmission over a single Ethernet cable, integrating it with Zoom requires significant technical effort to ensure balanced sound levels in the meeting room and on the broadcast.

Adding remote participation necessitates a thorough pre-meeting process, including rebooting and testing microphones, audio processors, and digital interfaces. This additional complexity will increase preparation time and demand greater staff effort to ensure seamless communication.

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DTV staff are committed to producing high-quality public meetings. While the operating budget may experience a slight increase, the significant impact will be on staff capacity and production timelines. With the hiring of a Chief Communications Officer, the DTV team has recalibrated community expectations for increased video content. If remote integration is implemented here, it will inevitably affect other video production projects and social media content. Though the extent of this impact is difficult to quantify, it remains a key consideration.

The Texas Open Meetings Act allows for remote participation, enabling members to engage in discussions and vote on agenda items. **However, it is important to note that members participating remotely do not count toward the quorum required to convene a meeting.** For Planning and Zoning Commission meetings, a quorum of four is required to attend in person, and with only five members currently serving on the Commission, only one member can participate remotely at any given time.

To ensure fairness and balance, the City must carefully manage remote participation. While all commissioners may request remote participation, it is essential to exercise this privilege equitably.

**CONCLUSION:**

Providing remote participation for Planning and Zoning Commissioners may be possible with existing staff but will shift DTV's focus away from other video production projects. Balancing these competing priorities requires careful consideration of the broader impact on the City's mission and goals. To ensure a sustainable approach, staff recommends that, if the Council chooses to pursue this option, a formal policy be developed to address the associated challenges and provide clear guidelines moving forward.

**NEXT STEPS:**

If this proceeds to the Agenda Committee and direction is provided on a path forward, staff will prepare a follow up work session.

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**REQUESTOR:**

Council Member Meltzer

**STAFF TIME TO COMPLETE REPORT:**

5 hours

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**PARTICIPATING DEPARTMENTS:**

Marketing and Communications