Closed Captioning

NOTE: The following is a preliminary scope of what modifications would be required for closed captioning. The City Clerk's Office, in cooperation with other city staff, is finalizing its research and will provide an implementation recommendation in the 2007-2008 budget process. If you desire auxiliary services to assist in viewing or hearing the City Commission meetings or reading the agenda and minutes for the meeting, please contact the City Clerk's Office at 954-828-5002 and arrangements will be made to provide these services for you.

MEMORANDUM NO. 06-199

TO: Mayor Jim Naugle
           Vice Mayor Cindi Hutchinson
           Commissioner Christine Teel
           Commissioner Charlotte E. Rodstrom
           Commissioner Carlton B. Moore

FROM: Jonda K. Joseph, City Clerk

COPY: George Gretsas, City Manager
           Robert Bates, Director of Professional Standards
           Tim Edkin, Director of Information Technology Services

SUBJ: Closed captioning for City Commission meetings

DATE: September 29, 2006

Attached is a report that Assistant City Clerk Larry Fuller prepared concerning closed captioning for City Commission meetings. The report provides a preliminary scope of what modifications would be required and additional meeting preparation/followup for both on-site and off-site captioning. The estimates are just that. More staff time including Information Technology Services and Facilities Management would be necessary before a final decision could be reached.

As you will see, we went through the RFP process, but did not receive any bid for on-site captioning. We aggressively looked throughout the state for vendors providing on-site captioning.

CLOSED CAPTIONING OPTION 1
IN-HOUSE CAPTIONER

This is the preferred method of captioning our City Commission Meetings. Under this option we would have a Captioner physically present in the Chamber and in the 8th Floor Conference Room during the meetings providing the captioning to Channel 78. This would allow for a "real-time" captioning of the meeting (very little delay between hearing the spoken word and seeing the captions on the broadcast).

Below is a listing of the necessary space modifications for captioning.

1. A booth would need to be constructed in the back of the Chamber that would isolate the Captioner from the chamber. This booth would need to be elevated high enough so the Captioner would be able to have a clear view of the dais and speaker's podium at all times so the Captioner would be able to see which Commissioner or member of the public was speaking. This booth would need to be enclosed in glass to cut out as much noise as possible and be large enough to hold the Captioner, their equipment and the computer equipment necessary to encode their typing into a data stream that will be sent to Comcast along with the audio and video data streams that we currently send.

2. A speaker would need to be installed in the booth so the Captioner would be able to hear what was being said.

3. The booth would need to have electric service as well as all the required cables to connect the equipment to the A/V Room.

4. The 8th Floor Conference room would need to be wired so the data stream created by the Captioner could be sent to the 1st Floor encoder and on to Comcast.

5. A work area for the Captioner would need to be created in the Conference Room so the Captioner has a clear view of all Commissioners and any public speakers.

Following is a list of equipment the City would need to purchase and the estimated costs.

1.	A stenograph machine	$ 2,000.00
2.	Captioning Software	$ 3,800.00
3.	Encoder	$ 3,090.00
4.	Computers (2)	$ 5,000.00
5.	Cables	$ 500.00
6.	Captioning Contract	$50,000.00

Major hurdles with this option are:

1. Inability to locate a company that can provide the captioning service on-site.
2. Renovations of the Chamber.
3. IT Department would need to update the captioning software with the Captioners library of keystroke shortcuts before each meeting.

CLOSED CAPTIONING OPTION 2
OFF-SITE CAPTIONER

Under this option the Captioner would be located off-site (most likely in the Mid-West). The Captioner would watch the Conference and Regular meetings via an Internet Web connection, type the captions and transmit them back to City Hall via a telephone line. The data would then be encoded and sent to Comcast to be incorporated into our broadcast. The IT Department would need to broadcast two different webcasts of the meetings, one from the fixed camera in the Chamber for the Captioner and the normal webcast using the Comcast camera person.

Using an off-site Captioner would make modifications to the Chamber or 8th Floor Conference Room unnecessary.

Following is a list of equipment the City would need to purchase and the estimated costs.

1. Encoder $ 3,090.00
2. Computers (1) $ 2,500.00
3. Cables $ 500.00
4. Captioning Contract $50,000.00
5. Dedicated Telephone line for Captioner   Unknown
6. Second web transmission from Chamber Fixed Camera   Unknown

Major hurdles with this option are:

1. Possibility that the Regular meeting could only be broadcast via the fixed camera.
2. The IT Department would need to send two separate webcasts for the Regular meeting, one from the fixed camera for the Captioner and one from the Comcast cameraperson for broadcast.
3. The IT Department would need to ensure that the telephone line from the Captioner is operational during both meetings.
4. There would be a significant delay between the words being spoken and seeing the captions on the broadcast.
5. The Captioner would only have a view of the dais. Unless the floor podium were moved to the middle of the chamber so it would be in view of the fixed camera, the Captioner would not be able to see or identify any speakers other than those on the dais.
6. If the off-site Captioner came from a pool they would not have the familiarity with the Mayor and Commissioners that an on-site contractor would have making it much more difficult for the Captioner to correctly identify a speaker by voice.
7. Should there be a loss of connection with the web or telephone line the meetings could not be captioned.