



**CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH
CITY COUNCIL MEETING – COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS REPORT**

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: NATALIE MOSER, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 2023

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO REINSTATE REMOTE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AT PUBLIC MEETINGS

Huntington Beach is a dynamic community represented by many groups including seniors, individuals with mobility issues, students, young adults, families, business owners, and more. However, not all individuals receive or provide input to the City in the same ways. Some engage with the City using online tools such as our website, the MyHB app, and Zoom, while others use more traditional means such as cable TV, mailings, and phone calls.

Over the last few years, the City has doubled down on expanding its communication tools to increase transparency, participation, and communication. This has allowed greater access for residents to receive information and share input, as well as for elected representatives and staff to hear from a wider range of community members, which is critical to making an informed decision at a public meeting.

However, the recent decision to remove remote public participation (via Zoom) at meetings of the City Council and Boards, Commissions and Committees (BCC) limits the ability of some residents to engage with us. We all have experienced days where an unexpected illness, traffic jam, childcare issue, or work has gotten in the way of well-laid plans to attend scheduled events like a Council meeting. Yet the remote option has provided flexibility for those individuals to provide public comment, when they otherwise could not. This particularly applies to individuals with limited mobility, who might never have previously been able to fully engage with the City until we offered this remote public participation option.

This flexibility is important for our large and dynamic community. Remote public participation at City meetings is a low-cost solution that invites a wider range of residents into the Chambers, albeit virtually. Without this option, the input we receive, particularly before a major Council decision is made, would be limited.

At this time, several major Orange County cities still offer online public participation including Santa Ana, Irvine, Fullerton and Costa Mesa. It would be beneficial for Huntington Beach, as the fourth largest city in Orange County, to provide the same option to our residents.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

I would like to request the City Council to reinstate the remote public participation option during meetings of the City Council and all BCCs, in the spirit of increasing public access, civic discourse, and transparency. If needed, the City Council could reassess the need for remote options periodically, moving forward.