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Making Technology Work for Orinda

Granicus system to give citizens easier access to documents and remote streaming video access to meetings

Laurie Snyder

Most every Orindan wanting to learn more about Orinda's City Council or Commission meetings has experienced the frustration, at one point or another, of clicking on links to staff reports and other agenda materials posted on the City's website - only to be met with error messages indicating that the documents they are seeking are currently unavailable.

At the September 19 City Council meeting, residents and Council members received the happy news that this situation will be changing for the better - and the even more exciting news that City Council meetings will soon be available to be streamed to laptops, home computers, and other remote locations early next year.

Staff have been transitioning documents from the City's Docushare web site portal to its new system - Granicus - since March. Docushare had been implemented by the City in 2008, states the staff report, to allow "members of the public to view and download public meeting materials at no cost. The platform was originally selected for its ease of use and its low price point." Problems ensued, however, as Orindans found it increasingly difficult to access key documents because the Orinda Docushare user license was only able to grant access to 12 members of the general public at any one time.

Because the expense to upgrade the City's user license would have been too costly in light of the City's current budget constraints, "Council directed staff [in 2011] to seek alternatives to the City's online agenda packet access system. The purpose was to find a better, more effective means to allow members of the public to access City public meeting materials." Council also asked staff "to research options to video stream the City Council meetings to allow residents to remotely view the public Council meetings."

Staff research showed that Granicus would offer Orinda "a complete platform to access meeting materials with an unlimited user license at a comparable price to what the City now pays for its current, limited license system.

Granicus is an award winning solutions provider for government transparency leading the way in online information for over 25 years and serving nearly 1,000 local, state and federal agencies." The system is also used by the City of Walnut Creek.

In addition to the system's capability to stream video of Council meetings, it "enhances the public's access to meeting materials by embedding links to staff reports directly into the agenda. As a result, members of [the] public will be able to quickly view a corresponding staff report simply by clicking on the item on the agenda."

City leaders anticipate that Orinda "will be fully supported on the Granicus platform by October 2012." The annual cost - \$8,500 - has already been factored into the adopted budget for Fiscal Year 2012-2013. "This amount includes the cost of data storage and site hosting, along with the capability to video and audio stream public meetings.

Should the City decide to implement the video stream portion of the service package, the City would need to invest in a one time cost of camera equipment and installation estimated at approximately \$5,000," which would be drawn from the Information Systems Internal Fund Budget.

"I think this looks fantastic," said Council Member Dean Orr. "This system," said Vice Mayor Amy Worth, "will be much more accessible."

Reach the reporter at: laurie@lamorindaweekly.com

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