

8-10-2022 - Reno City Council Meeting - Item # A.3

[illegible]

Public Comment: New limits on public meetings documents

1 message

Patrick File, NOGC <nevadaopengov@gmail.com>

Tue, Aug 9, 2022 at 5:41 PM

To: Publiccomment@reno.gov

Cc: mayor@reno.gov, reesed@reno.gov, "brekhusj@reno.gov" <brekhusj@reno.gov>, duern@reno.gov, delgadood@reno.gov, weberb@reno.gov, jardonn@reno.gov

Dear Mayor Schieve and Members of the Council:

The [Nevada Open Government Coalition](#) and the individuals and organizations listed below are deeply troubled to learn of the City of Reno's recent decision to roll back public access to records related to city council meetings. The move is wholly counterproductive both for members of the public seeking information about city government decisions as well as for city government employees striving to meet their legal and civic obligation to transparency.

On Aug. 3, 2022, This is Reno [reported](#) that the introduction of a new online meeting portal was the basis for the change: Decades' worth of meeting agendas, minutes, supplementary materials and recordings were previously available on the portal; now only three years' worth of meeting recordings will be made available, supplemental materials will be made available for up to one year. City Clerk Mikki Huntsman explained that the reason for the new policy was that it met the city's minimum legal obligation for making the records publically accessible, nothing more. If people wanted to see records older than what was online, she said, they could file a public records request.

This decision is baffling, particularly at a time when civic interest in government decision-making is high, especially in Reno. An election is coming up. Misinformation about government is rampant. The city is involved in numerous ambitious long-term and complex development and improvement initiatives that are drawing public attention. Journalists and other active citizens are striving to connect these issues to their full historical context. There could arguably be no worse time to reduce accessibility to public information about government decision-making. Even if the city believes it is doing more than what is legally required, now is no time to start doing less than it has been doing. Reno should see being open and transparent as part of its core mission, not just a matter of technical compliance.

Moreover, removing these records from a publicly-facing and searchable website and requiring interested individuals to file public records requests pointlessly places new burdens on both those seeking information as well as the city employees who must promptly fulfill their requests for records under Nevada law. In many cases, users of a website could perform multiple searches to locate the information they seek in a matter of minutes, but the city may now require days or even weeks of back-and-forth with city employees to accomplish the same basic task. As is often the case, underserved populations—those with limited funds for public records fees or unreliable access to computers or the internet, for example—will be disproportionately impacted by this new rule.

Attentive citizens might be forgiven for thinking that a reduction in government transparency is the point of this change, particularly when other dynamic and forward-looking cities are headed in the opposite direction: For example, people interested in decades' worth of city meetings and associated documents can easily search for them for [Las Vegas](#); [Austin, Texas](#); [Spokane, Washington](#); and [Albuquerque, New Mexico](#); just like they used to be able to do in Reno.

We urge the council to promptly reverse this decision and find a way to restore accessibility to this crucial public information as quickly as possible. Transparency is at the heart of public trust in government; the longer the new policy is in place the more harm may be done to that trust.

Patrick File, President, Nevada Open Government Coalition (NOGC)

Maggie McLetchie, Vice President, NOGC

Sondra Cosgrove, NOGC board member and Executive Director of Vote Nevada

Shelby Fleshood, NOGC board member and Director of Open Records, Nevada Policy Research Institute

Richard Karpel, NOGC board member and executive director, Nevada Press Association

Colton Lochhead, NOGC board member and Reporter, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Rio Lacanlale, NOGC board member and Reporter, Reno Gazette Journal/USA Today Network

Athar Haseebullah, Esq., Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada

Dr. Bob Conrad, publisher, This Is Reno

Kristen Hackbarth, editor, This Is Reno

Alicia Barber, PhD, professional historian and author

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RenoCityCouncilRecords.8.10.2022.pdf
227K



Public Comment <publiccomment@reno.gov>

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1 message

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Tue, Aug 9, 2022 at 1:23 PM

Reply-To: DonomaUnity@reno.gov

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Voice Message delivered by Donoma Unify

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Reno parking enforcement is absolutely useless and should be closed. I've had them ticket car and abandon car in front of my house 2 times in the last two weeks, but they refused to tow it away. Why do we even have that department? If they're not going to be able to fulfill the threats? They make absolutely useless.

(Transcription with medium confidence)

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RENO CITY COUNCIL

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Thank you for participating. We know your time is valuable and we look forward to hearing your comments, ideas and questions. The Mayor and City Council request that all comments are expressed in a courteous manner. Public comment is limited to three minutes each. Comments should be addressed to the council as a whole, not an individual member.

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ADDRESS: _____

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DO YOU WISH TO SPEAK? YES ☒ NO ☐

COUNCIL MEETING DATE _____

AGENDA ITEM 51

IN FAVOR ☒ IN OPPOSITION ☐

COMMENTS: _____

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