



Legislation Text

File #: 130855., Version: 1

Discuss Hosting a Telephone Town Hall Meeting (NB)

This item provides a brief description of Telephone Town Hall meetings and requests direction from the City Commission on the logistics of holding a Telephone Town Hall Meeting in Gainesville.

****ESTIMATED STAFF DISCUSSION 10 MINUTES****

As part of the City of Gainesville FY 15/16 Biennial Budget Calendar, the City Commission approved dates for a series of public meetings to gather feedback from residents on the City's strategic priorities. The first Town Hall Meeting was held on February 10th at the Senior Recreation Center and approximately 70 residents attended. To reach out to a greater number of residents, the following Town Hall Meeting was scheduled to be conducted over the phone on March 18th, when the City would call out to approximately 30,000 residents. The Telephone Town Hall Meeting scheduled for March 18th was cancelled to give staff an opportunity to share the logistics of the proposed Telephone Town Hall Meeting with the City Commission.

Staff has identified six government entities in Florida that conduct Telephone Town Hall Meetings, including the City of Fort Lauderdale, the City of North Port, Pinellas County, TBARTA, the Sarasota County School Board and the City of Palm Bay. In these Town Hall Meetings, the format is typically as follows:

- A list of residential home phone numbers is obtained and calls are placed at the beginning of the meeting;
- The vendor moderates the call and welcomes participants to the public meeting, inviting them to press zero if they would like to ask a question;
- The Mayor and City Commission give opening remarks;
- The vendor provides screeners, who take the questions and comments from residents on the line throughout the call and enter them into a queue, with a number that indicates the relevancy of the question to the focus of the meeting;
- As calls are selected to go on the air, the moderator introduces the caller and brings them on the line to ask a question, then turns it over to the Mayor and City Commission to respond;
- Callers are brought on the air in this manner for one hour, with the goal of hearing and responding to as many questions as possible;
- At the end of the call, the moderator thanks everyone for their participation and invites those who were not able to ask a question on the air to stay on the line to leave a voice mail;
- The Mayor and City Commission then give closing comments;
- After the meeting, staff responds to those questions left as a voice mail; and
- Following the meeting, a complete recording of the call and all dialog during the call are provided to the City.

Staff is requesting direction from the City Commission on a few key logistics with respect to Gainesville's Telephone Town Hall Meeting, more specifically:

- Should the call focus on a certain topic, such as those addressed at the Town Hall Meeting in February or should the meeting be open to all business of the City?
- Should calls be selected based on a given criteria or should all calls be taken in the order they are

received?

- Should there be any parameters to the length of time a caller is on the air?

The cost of a Telephone Town Hall meeting is approximately \$4,500 for a one-hour call.

The City Commission: 1) receive a presentation from staff on the logistics of a Telephone Town Hall Meeting; 2) provide direction to the City Manager on the preferred logistics of a Telephone Town Hall for the City of Gainesville; and 3) direct the Clerk of the Commission to reschedule a Telephone Town Hall Meeting.

The City Commission: 1) receive a presentation from staff on the logistics of a Telephone Town Hall Meeting; and 2) direct the Clerk of the Commission to refrain from rescheduling a Telephone Town Hall Meeting.