



City Council Agenda Item 9-A  
Meeting of August 12, 2008

## **CITY OF BELMONT**

City Councilmember Agenda Item 9

FROM: Warren Lieberman

RE: Item 9: Encouraging Citizen Participation at Council Meetings

City Councilmembers:

### **Description of Issue/Request**

I am strongly committed to finding ways to making it easier for those living in the community to participate in local government. Over the past six months, during our Community lunches, several Belmont residents have agreed or commented that they would be very supportive and appreciative if the Council could find ways to allow them to participate in City Council meetings from home. They have noted that frequently their responsibilities and commitments make it impossible for them to attend a Council meeting, but they have a strong interest in doing so.

During the Town Hall Meeting held by Congresswomen Anna Eshoo, Congresswomen Eshoo commented to me that she has recently been engaged in creating “virtual” town hall meetings where people can phone in questions. She noted that her constituents are very appreciative of her efforts in this regard and that citizen participation is very high. She encouraged me to try to take steps that would make it easier for those living in Belmont to participate in our local affairs. Congresswomen Eshoo’s staff has given me information about the firm they use to help carry out these virtual town hall meetings.

I am requesting the Council consider directing staff to investigate ways in which we can facilitate citizen participation in our Council meetings, without requiring people to physically attend these meetings. I would expect that any such citizen participation would be for a limited time during the meeting (e.g., 15 – 20 minutes).

### **Approximately how much staff involvement will this item take?**

I would like staff to come back with a short report on what options, if any, it believes are reasonable, financially affordable, and can be implemented with minimal investment in new technology.

### **Financial Implications?**

I do not expect this to have a significant financial impact.

**How time sensitive is this issue?**

I would like to see this issue addressed in the next few months.

**General Plan/Vision Statement**

A few examples of how this effort is consistent with our General Plan and Vision Statement can be found in the following statements contained on the City of Belmont's website home page:

We get involved in town matters because we care about living here

We connect with each other in all kinds of gathering places

Our strong sense of community and enjoyment of the town's assets and activities deepen as we become better informed and connected

**Attachments**

None.