

ITEM	9
MANAGER'S REPORT NO.	34
COUNCIL MEETING	94/05/30

TO: City Manager 1994 May 05

FROM: City Clerk

SUBJECT: Electronic Access to Council Agenda and Minutes

PURPOSE: The purpose of this report is to respond to a request that Council consider the implementation of an Electronic Access system for the Council Agenda and Minutes.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT a copy of this report be sent to Mr. D. V. Preston, #401 - 6737 Station Hill Court, Burnaby, B. C., V3N 4V2.

REPORT

BACKGROUND:

Late in 1993 Council received a proposal from Mr. D. V. Preston suggesting a method for electronic access to Council agendas and minutes. This report provides Council with the results of staff research into the proposal and an outline of the requirements should Council wish to implement such a system.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Currently the Burnaby Public Library provides access to a Municipal Affairs Database (MAD) which provides a broad range of information on a variety of municipal topics from newspaper articles to summaries of Municipal Manager Reports, Council committee reports, the City newsletter and bylaws. Mr. Preston's request goes beyond this service to include complete agendas and minutes of Council meetings available via a similar phone line system.

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PROPOSAL:

An initial examination of the proposal indicates that a pilot system could be implemented with startup costs associated with hardware and software of approximately \$7,500. This sum would provide for a stand alone PC with specific application software, call support software, security administration software and modems. However, this does not include the staff time to gather and input information not already available within the electronic system. In other words, while information created in the Municipal Hall could be electronically transferred to the information system fairly easily, other material which appears on a Council agenda would have to be directly put into the system by staff. The most effective way to do this is through optical scanning and would require the purchase of scanning equipment in addition to the other purchases previously noted. The scanned materials must then be indexed, cross-referenced and linked to agenda items or other source documents when stored in the system.

Separate telephone lines would also have to be installed and the number published for the use of the general public. The cost of this service is estimated at \$55 per month per line.

Perhaps the greatest cost item is the staff time to maintain and update the system. Given the current staffing complement and workload in the Clerk's Department it would place a more onerous burden on staff to provide this service. Information Services staff would initially be required to install, setup, document and proceduralize departmental operations, including coordination with all departments who prepare reports and other information for Council agendas. Consideration would also have to be given to the time frame for release of this information to the public. Theoretically, it would become available as soon as it is put into the system. However, our current practice is to make agenda material available to the public after Council members have had the opportunity to peruse the information themselves so that they are prepared for any questions which may arise prior to the Council meeting. In order to accommodate this process, an appropriate security system would have to be in place in order to release the information at a specified time.

Making information available in this manner broadens the scope of individuals who would have access to full Council agendas and minutes. However, it would not eliminate the production of paper copies either internally or to Council members or to members of the public who do not have access to the appropriate electronic equipment at home. These persons would find themselves having to travel to the Library or City Hall to access the system. Individuals may find that they would like a "hard" copy of a particular item of interest which also necessitates a trip or call to City Hall.

Although we publish a limited number of public agendas, we have and will continue to provide upon request copies of any particular items of interest to members of the public.

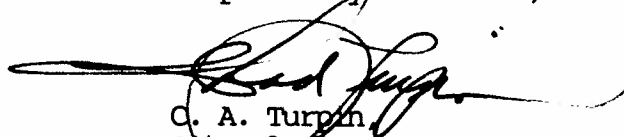
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CONCLUSION:

While this proposal is certainly within our capability to implement, it is not without significant capital and operating costs. Therefore, considering the current economic situation one must pose the question whether this is a "need" to have or a "nice" to have and examine where it fits in the realm of expenditure priorities.

Staff would be pleased to prepare a more detailed report on costs and requirements should Council wish to seriously consider implementation of this service.

Respectfully submitted,


C. A. Turpin
City Clerk

cc. Director Administrative and
Community Services
Director Finance
Information Services Director

