

**Council Meeting: March 6, 2012****SUBJECT: Inclusion of Councilmembers' Rationale in Minutes  
(Information Only)**

According to "*The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*" by Alice Sturgis (the official reference used by City of Sunnyvale), "minutes are a record of all actions and proceedings but not a record of discussion." Under the section on "Preparing Minutes", this general concept is reinforced by Sturgis with regard to the issue of recording individual views on specific issues: "No member can have views or protests on a motion recorded in the minutes unless a motion permitting such action is passed by majority vote."

At two recent Council meetings, the minutes from a previous meeting were pulled from the Consent Calendar with a request from one Councilmember to include the reasoning for his dissent on an item from the previous meeting. In both instances, a motion was made and seconded to revise the minutes accordingly. The full Council voted to approve the minutes as amended.

While this is in keeping with the spirit of Sturgis, a best practice would be for members desiring to have their views on a particular motion recorded to make that known immediately following the vote on the main motion. Doing so would allow the full Council to consider the request in timely fashion, and avoid the work involved in subsequent revisions to the minutes (similarly, the City's Boards and Commissions were recently encouraged to make brief statements explaining the rationale for their votes when taking actions so that City Council would have the benefit of that information via board and commission meeting minutes--see Attachment A).

Alternatively, for procedural simplification, following the vote the member could request the rationale for their vote be included for the record, and make a brief restatement at this time. If there is no objection, the members' statement(s) at this time would be included in the minutes.

Absent taking advantage of this recommended remedy during the original meeting in question, an acceptable albeit less preferable option is for Council to propose an amendment to the minutes "consistent with or as reflected by the recording of that meeting". This would ensure that the original views of the Councilmember were captured correctly, and eliminate any reliance on memory for specific wording.

In any event, most regular Council meetings are recorded and made available on-demand on the City's Webpage, for anyone interested in knowing the detailed deliberations of the meeting.

**PUBLIC CONTACT**

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, at the Sunnyvale Senior Center, Community Center and Department of Public Safety; and by making the agenda and report available at the Sunnyvale Public Library, the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's Web site.

Reviewed by:

Robert Walker, Director, Office of the City Manager

Prepared by: Kathleen Franco Simmons, City Clerk

Approved by:

Gary M. Luebbers

City Manager

**Attachments**

Attachment A: Letter from Mayor to Board and Commission Chairs

# CITY OF SUNNYVALE

*The Heart of Silicon Valley<sup>sm</sup>*

456 WEST OLIVE AVENUE SUNNYVALE, CALIFORNIA 94086 (408) 730-7473

Melinda Hamilton  
Mayor

December 13, 2011

Jim Griffith  
Vice Mayor

Sunnyvale Board and Commission Chairs and Vice Chairs

Otto Lee  
Councilmember

Dear Chairs and Vice Chairs:

In reviewing the minutes of recent meetings, my colleagues and I have identified an issue that requires clarification.

Christopher R. Moylan  
Councilmember

Board and Commission minutes report the votes and actions taken by the board or commission. The minutes are also intended to include a brief summary of the members' rationale for their votes. It is important to Council to know why the members voted the way they did, and the primary mechanism for transmitting this information is through the minutes.

Anthony (Tony) Spitaleri  
Councilmember

David Whittum  
Councilmember

Board and Commission Liaisons have recently received guidance on preparing minutes, with instructions to include a brief summary of the rationale for members' votes when stated. Still, however, board and commission members are often voting without explaining *why* they are voting the way they do. When presiding as chair of your board or commission, please encourage your members to make a brief statement of the rationale for their vote at the time the vote is taken. No rationale would be necessary for items handled on the Consent Calendar where no separate discussion is held.

I expect that this guidance will not only prove helpful as you facilitate your meetings, but will assist your staff liaison with preparing minutes, will provide more informative minutes for your board or commission and the community, and importantly, will be more informative to Council.

The Council appreciates the time and effort that you devote to the city. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or any other council member. We would be happy to discuss them with you.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,  


Melinda Hamilton  
Mayor

cc: City Council  
City Manager