



**Item:** Res. 9997, A Resolution Establishing Protocol for Video Recording Equipment Placement and Use During Commission Meetings

**From:** David L. Nielsen, Interim City Attorney

**Initiated By:** City Commission

**Presented By:** David L. Nielsen, Interim City Attorney

**Action Requested:** Adopt or Deny Resolution No. 9997

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**Suggested Motion:**

1. Commissioner moves:

“I move that the City Commission (adopt/deny) Res. 9997”

2. Mayor calls for a second, discussion, public comment, and calls the vote.

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**Staff Recommendation:** Consider Adoption of Resolution No. 9997.

**Background:**

Significant Impacts

The Commission meetings are open to the public and may be recorded audibly and visually by members of the press and the public. Under the law the Commission has the authority to prohibit disruptive conduct in the recording of the meeting and to ensure that video camera placement does not create unsafe conditions to persons attending the meeting. Persons placing multiple unattended video cameras on tripods within the Commission Chambers create an unnecessary commotion that interferes with the right of meeting attendees to observe the proceeding distraction-free. Without safety guidelines as to the placement of the tripod-mounted video cameras, the camera operator may unknowingly create a hazard to others through ill-advised placement of the camera, its cables and even the operator. Camera placement is also important to give other camera operators, especially members of the television news, equal if not better unimpaired access for filming purposes.

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation has been through public comments made by an interested citizen at the public comment portion of the Commission meeting. I contacted the two primary television stations and asked them about impacts such a protocol would have on their ability to film

Commission meeting for news casting. They said the suggested protocol would not be adverse to their work.

Purpose

The purpose of the resolution is to establish a protocol to only allow one video camera per person to reduce commotion by citizens setting up more than one video camera on a tripod and scurrying around to and fro between cameras and other areas of the Chamber. The protocol requires camera placement to maintain adequate aisle spacing and prohibits placement of loose cords and cables across aisle ways. It establishes a hierarchy for prime placement locations, giving public television the first priority, other publicly broadcasted television stations a second priority and private recordings by citizens for personal benefit, last priority.

Conclusion

The protocol for video camera use in City Commission meetings sets a balance between the rights of persons to record Commission meetings and a reduction of unnecessary interference and unsafe conditions that might result from inattentive operation of video cameras.

**Concurrences:**

Not applicable.

**Fiscal Impact:**

None

**Alternatives:**

Maintain status quo which depends upon the sensitivity and courtesy by video camera operators.

**Attachments/Exhibits:** Res. 9997

RESOLUTION 9997

A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING PROTOCOL FOR VIDEO  
RECORDING EQUIPMENT PLACEMENT AND USE DURING  
COMMISSION MEETINGS

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WHEREAS, the Great Falls City Commission holds public meetings in rooms located in the Civic Center, including but not limited to Room 206, the Commission Chambers; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to §2-3-211, MCA, accredited press representatives are not prohibited from taking photographs, televising, or recording public meetings, provided the activities do not interfere with the conduct of the meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Montana Attorney General Mike Greely in 38 Op. Att’y Gen. No. 8 (1979) held that members of the public have the same rights as accredited press representatives under §2-3-211, MCA, to make a mechanical recording of a public meeting, under the same conditions as the accredited press; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission meetings are regularly recorded, audibly and visually, by public television media representatives and private citizens through the use of television and video cameras placed on tripods and other mechanical supports within the room; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission finds that establishing a protocol for the number, placement location and wired connectivity of television and video cameras provides for orderly, safe and optimum use of these television and video devices with minimal disturbance of the conduct of the meeting; and,

WHEREAS, the City Commission finds that television and video cameras utilized by press representatives representing publicly-broadcasted television stations and networks (“public television”) should be allowed a priority in placement locations within the meeting room since they benefit a larger number of the members of the public than do private video recording made primarily for personal use; and,

WHEREAS, the placement, location and wire connections of television and video cameras should be defined to protect the safety of persons attending the public meeting.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF GREAT FALLS, MONTANA:

That the following protocol establishes the number, placement location, and wiring connections for television and other mechanical audio-video or video recording camera or device (“video device”) as follows:

1. No person may operate, attend to or manipulate more than one video device at a public meeting, regardless of whether the recording device is hand-held or affixed to a tripod or other portable mechanical support.
2. All video devices placed on a tripod or other mechanical stand in the Commission Chambers must be located in the designated area on the east side of the Chambers. Video devices used by members of the press or publicly-broadcasted television stations are given priority locations within the meeting room to optimize the recording quality of the video device. In the City Commission Chambers, Room 206, Civic Center, public television is allowed to be located closest to the public podium and to the Commission seating. The video devices used by the Government Access Channel (City 7) are given first priority for placement location, and other public television media are given second priority on a first-come, first-serve basis.
3. Wires used directly or indirectly by the video devices, whether for electrical power, microphone connections or remote controls of device, must be placed in a neat and orderly fashion and may not loosely cross aisles used by persons for ingress and egress from the meeting room or moving freely about the meeting room to access seating areas and the public podium. Wiring that must cross these areas must be covered, anchored or otherwise securely protected to prevent tripping by persons walking over the wires.
4. A video device may not be set upon a tripod or other portable mechanical stand in a location whereby the video device and the person operating, attending or manipulating the video device does not allow for unobstructed passage by a person using any aisle with no less than three (3) feet in width, including aisles established by movable seating.
5. Video devices mounted on a tripod or other mechanical supports or needing the running of wires to be connected or used in conjunction with the video device should, if possible, be set up prior to the opening of the meeting to avoid interference with the conduct of the meeting and to not block, hinder or impede public members from attending, observing and hearing the meeting.
6. The operation of, attendance to, or manipulation of, a video device must be done as unobtrusively as possible and avoid producing unnecessary noise, commotion or distraction to other persons in attendance.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Commission of the City of Great Falls, Montana, on this 7<sup>th</sup> day November, 2012.

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Michael J. Winters, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Lisa Kunz, City Clerk

(CITY SEAL)

APPROVED FOR LEGAL CONTENT:

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David L. Nielsen, Interim City Attorney