

# Walnut Creek, CA

City dramatically reduces costs and staff time dedicated to the public meeting process



## Problem

The city clerk of Walnut Creek followed a time-consuming post-meeting workflow, taking her days to complete minutes. Her staff also received several public information requests each day and was burdened with processing each inquiry. The staff time alone dedicated to these requests cost Walnut Creek close to ten thousand dollars a year.

## Solution

The city contracted with Granicus to provide live and archived streaming and public meeting management tools, allowing the clerk to record motions, notes, and votes as well as index agenda items live during the meeting.

## Benefit

Walnut Creek saved thirty thousand dollars in its first year alone, provided greater access to residents, and reduced the city clerk's time spent creating and publishing minutes. They have also saved staff time dedicated to public information requests, waiting to present at meetings, and overall reduced their paper consumption.

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City Clerk

## Fast Facts

**Agency Type:** Local Government

**Population:** 65,000

**Solution:**

Granicus Platform

Government Transparency Suite

Meeting Efficiency Suite

**Active Since:** 2006

## Walnut Creek spent countless hours publishing meeting minutes and responding to public information requests

Walnut Creek wanted to upgrade its public meeting workflow and reduce the amount of time it took to create and publish meeting minutes. Patrice Olds, City Clerk, used to create long summary minutes using Microsoft Word. Olds would type her notes into Word during the meeting and fine-tune them after, adding in anything she may have missed and making corrections. Walnut Creek recorded the audio of meetings, giving Olds the ability to confirm her notes against the spoken word and confirm accuracy. However, Olds found that locating a specific item on the audio file actually added a significant amount of time to her minutes process. “My goal was to have the minutes ready to be approved for the next council meeting, but we didn’t always make it. Sometimes it would be a month between approvals and publication,” recalls Olds.

Walnut Creek averaged about twenty public information requests each month. Olds estimated that she and her team spent about half an hour on each request. “We used to get calls first thing the day after the meeting from staff and public asking about the actions taken during the meeting. We would have to hustle to get orders out,” recalls Olds. While handling demands one at a time may not seem overwhelming, spending close to ten hours a month processing and fulfilling requests took valuable time away from essential responsibilities and increased Walnut Creek’s expenditures.

The city was looking to simplify its minutes and meeting processes while making it easier for the public to get the information they wanted. The city needed a solution

that would automate their workflow and increase government transparency. “I attended a demonstration of Granicus at a conference and flat-out fell in love with the program, I could see immediately the ease of use and its inherent efficiencies,” recalls Olds.

## The city contracted with Granicus to make meetings more efficient and simplify the minutes workflow

Walnut Creek went live with Granicus, providing residents with live streaming and archived video for City Council, Planning, and Transportation Commissions, as well as various other departmental meetings and public events.

Walnut Creek’s solution included Granicus’ Meeting Efficiency Suite, allowing Olds to simplify her process and ensure minutes accuracy. She transitioned from long summary minutes to an action-style format. This end-to-end automation allowed Olds to record motions, notes, and votes in the same program that generated her minutes. “Using Granicus, I was able to pre-load motions prior to a meeting and set the system to automatically start recording,” says Olds. The system also allowed Olds to index the recording during the meeting, making her post-meeting process much faster.

## Walnut Creek saved thousands in staff costs, reduced minutes creation time, and empowered constituents to locate critical information

Walnut Creek has seen impressive results since implementing Granicus. Olds has significantly reduced her

minutes creation time, allowing her to, “clean up raw notes during the meeting and then publish a draft of the minutes later that evening,” says Olds. With both the meeting archive and minutes available online within hours of the meeting’s completion, the clerk’s department has seen a significant reduction in public information requests. Compared to the calls her department received prior to Granicus Olds says that now, “the only time I get a call is if I don’t have the minutes posted by 8:00am the day after the meeting.”

Olds reports that her department has seen a decrease in the number of packets they create for each meeting now that council members can access the meeting agenda online, reducing paper costs and the time spent collecting, printing, and organizing agendas. “We used to print 30-50 copies of every discussion item for each meeting,” recalls Olds. Today, Olds might bring five copies to the meeting.

Walnut Creek has also seen improvements in areas they did not expect, like staff time waiting to present at meetings. “Our staff can watch meetings from their desk and keep working until their item is due to come up,” says Olds. This alone has saved the city tens of thousands of dollars a year in staff costs. Staff members no longer have to sit and wait during the meeting for their time to present; now they can more efficiently use their time working on key projects.

Additionally, Olds reports that for internal, all-hands meetings, “the City Manager no longer has to do multiple meetings at multiple times and locations. Now, we do one meeting, create a publishing point with Granicus, and staff can watch it from their desktops. This has saved so much staff cost and time in attending and supporting multiple meetings and ensures that everyone is getting the same information.”

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## Walnut Creek's Return on Investment (ROI) Report

Avoidable Packet Production	
Number of packets per meeting	50
Cost of printing (per page)	\$0.05
Average pages per packet	30
Meetings per month	4
Total costs avoided for packet production per month	\$300.00
<b>Total savings per year</b>	<b>\$3,600.00</b>
Avoidable Staff Time In Packet Production	
Average staff time for packet production (hours per meeting)	3
Staff hourly rate (\$)	\$30.00
Number of meetings per month	4
Total avoidable staff cost in packet production per month	\$360.00
<b>Total savings per year</b>	<b>\$4,320.00</b>
Staff Time Spent Waiting to Present at Meetings	
Average # of staff members present to speak at public meeting	3
Average time (in hours)	2
Staff hourly rate (\$)	\$52.00
Total number of public meetings potentially using Granicus each year	48
<b>Total avoidable staff cost in waiting to present at meetings per year</b>	<b>\$14,976.00</b>
Requests to Clerks Office for Public Meeting Information	
Total number for staff and citizen requests per month	20
Average time spent per request (in hours)	0.5
Staff hourly rate (\$)	\$52.00
Total clerk time savings per month	\$520.00
<b>Total savings per year</b>	<b>\$6,240.00</b>
Transcription of Meeting Minutes	
Average transcription hours spent per meeting	8
Number of meetings per month	2
Staff hourly rate (\$)	\$52.00
Projected staff time savings (%)	50%
Total projected minutes savings per month	\$416.00
<b>Total savings per year</b>	<b>\$4,992.00</b>
<b>Total projected cost savings per year</b>	<b>\$34,128.00</b>

Walnut Creek saved \$34,000 by implementing live and archived streaming video and simplifying their public meeting workflow.