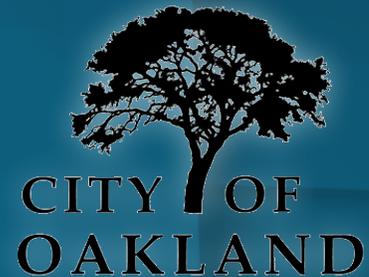


Oakland, California

The City of Oakland and Granicus:
an eGovernment Partnership



The City of Oakland, California, has created a buzz in California and across the United States over the last decade as one of the most vibrant, livable and trendy places around.

Consistently on lists for most sustainable cities, leadership at the City has made an effort to consistently utilize technology to promote efficiency and transparency to its citizenry.

Since 2006, this progressive and forward-thinking city has considered Granicus a partner in its legislative process as it seeks to enhance its transparency and citizen engagement efforts. Over the years, the City has worked with Granicus – the leader in cloud-based government efficiency, transparency and engagement software – to build out a comprehensive system that “mirrors the needs of the legislative process,” according to City Clerk LaTonda Simmons.

The legislative process is unique among the municipalities in California. Legislation must gain approval from no less than six standing committees before going to Council for final action. For this reason, the City had a complex set of software needs, so Simmons turned to Granicus.

SUCCESS HIGHLIGHTS

- Captures the “essence” of the legislative process using Webcasting
- Has increased citizen engagement with SpeakUp and eComment
- Easily manages 35 Boards and Commissions

FAST FACTS

Agency Type: City

Population: 413,775

Solution:

Webcasting

Legistar®

eComment

SpeakUpSM

Meeting Efficiency

iLegislate®

Boards and Commissions

Client Since: 2006

The City of Oakland and Granicus: an eGovernment Partnership

The City utilizes numerous Granicus solutions:

- **Webcasting** – Broadcast and archive public meetings for citizens to watch anywhere, any time.
- **Agenda Management** – Legistar moves the majority of the legislative process to a digital format.
- **Citizen Engagement** – Encourage and solicit feedback using SpeakUp and eComment, online tools to collect input from citizens.
- **Meeting Efficiency** – iLegislate is used to access supporting documents, read comments from citizens, and review archived videos.
- **Boards and Commissions** – Manages appointments and member terms of the 35 boards and commissions in the city.

“This is a very high-value relationship that we have,” Simmons says of the partnership between the City and Granicus.

However, it wasn’t always like this. When Simmons first joined the City Clerk’s office in Oakland, she was surprised by what she describes as “mayhem” around the office.



“There were people literally running in the hallways” trying to create agendas and finalize minutes from meetings, she says. Citizens had no good avenue to give feedback. The boards and commissions process was difficult to navigate and keep track of, and final determinations after city council meetings were difficult to obtain. When Simmons took over as City Clerk in 2005, she was determined to make

the office run more efficiently and openly.

It was 2006 when the City decided to team up with Granicus and make use of its Webcasting services for streaming city council meetings. Since then, as Granicus has grown, so has the City’s use of Granicus tools. It’s a partnership Simmons refers to as “amazing.”

Simmons believes this relationship helps dictate, drive and improve how legislation moves through the municipality’s workflow and “how we get to drive the effectiveness of that process.”

“Granicus heard what our legislative demands are, and they have educated us...if there’s a need to adjust the product itself, Granicus has done this.”

With the current needs of both staff and citizens met through Granicus’ technology, the City is looking ahead to what’s next.

“There’s an evolution occurring with legislative process,” Simmons says. “We have to take these municipal code-laden processes and deliverables, and we have to continue to refine our thinking about how we get that to the public.”

As for what she thinks the public will want from their government in the future, Simmons says, “the public is going to demand more of us, even if we can’t envision what that is. When you have a partnership with an organization that is not just [about] moving the product, but also moving the thinking of how you deliver things, that means there’s a future there.

“This is how I envisioned it when I became the City Clerk in 2005, and we’re grateful to have that kind of partnership with Granicus.”

OAKLAND COMMITS TO TRANSPARENCY

The City of Oakland, California, is one of a few cities that legislates its agenda process. Voters are involved in the creation of meeting agendas, further promoting citizen engagement and openness.



Legislative items move through six standing committees that construct the council meeting agenda. Approved items are then placed before the council for final action.

This legislative process is what City Clerk LaTonda Simmons refers to as “multi-dimensional” and complex, more so than the common process of a small committee deciding on its own what will be on the agenda. In this way, citizens have a greater say in the things they care about, which demystifies the legislative process for citizens.

While it increases citizen involvement, this unique system creates a complex workflow. Since the various committees and the council participate in a wide range of actions, it can be challenging to involve relevant items and persons into the process.

“Once [Webcasting] was there, and they could see it was tied to the legislative process, it was really a godsend,” Simmons says, “not just for the public and the press, but for the organization as well.”

Before implementing Granicus’ Webcasting and Legistar® products, very few of the workflows or processes were digitized or automated.

“It was a full-court press when it came time to try to obtain information from the clerk’s office,” says Simmons.

With Legistar, the City of Oakland’s complex and multi-staged legislative approval cycle has been digitized, with Granicus’ configurable software deployed in such a way that the individual workflow intricacies are captured and improved.

With live web streaming and on-demand archival of video, citizens and other interested parties can hear the determinations from wherever they are.

For the clerk’s office, the speed at which they can accurately report on the outcome of city council meetings has saved time, effort and stress. Citizens are able to see in more detail what went into a specific determination, since recording council meetings captures the “essence” of the legislative process, as Simmons calls it.

“Those details are complex, and how we convey that can be litigious and affects the lives of citizens,” Simmons says. “Before, people would crowd around televisions to watch tapes of these meetings so that everyone could land on the same page.”



ENGAGING THE CITIZENS OF OAKLAND

When the City of Oakland City Council members wish to read feedback from citizens to help make a decision on a particular item in the middle of a meeting, they use Granicus' iLegislate® app.

iLegislate enables elected officials to review meeting agendas, supporting documents and archived videos on iPad or Android tablets, and integrates feedback from Granicus' citizen participation tools, SpeakUp and eComment.

Since iLegislate and Legistar® integrate seamlessly, it has helped the City experience the gradual decline of paper usage when it comes to its agenda process. Since implementing iLegislate, City Clerk LaTonda Simmons has been able to prove that having a paperless agenda process would make information more easily accessible to councilors.



The City of Oakland places great emphasis on feedback from its citizens. For this reason, the City decided to implement SpeakUp (for open idea generation) and eComment (for public to comment on current agenda items). The data is then viewable by city councilors for consideration during meetings.

With SpeakUp, the City enjoys an open dialogue with citizens on topics of public safety, housing,

and more, using the platform to educate citizens about upcoming topics.

“We [want it] accessible at all times,” Simmons says. “My vision was to create a Clerk’s Office that existed 24/7 and transcended the normal government workday,” she says. “It shows that we’re committed to being transparent.”



So far, the public's usage of SpeakUp and eComment, and Council's adoption of iLegislate and paperless agendas, has created a reciprocal relationship

in the City of Oakland. When a citizen logs on to SpeakUp to give feedback on a particular issue, that comment or idea is then accessible by Council members directly through iLegislate. They can incorporate these comments right into their City Council meetings, which is something many cities aren't able to do. And because the City of Oakland receives a great deal of feedback from its highly involved citizens, having these tools makes chronicling this feedback a much simpler task.

“The tools are robust enough not just to receive the information, but to also deliver it to our Council, and that to me is an incredible standard of transparency and public participation.” Simmons says. “It's a win-win,” she says, “and it speaks for itself.”

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS MADE SIMPLE

The City of Oakland recently implemented the Granicus Boards and Commissions software to manage its complex process for appointing and tracking citizen board members' applications and terms of service.

The City currently has 35 boards and commissions, with more in the inception stage. Since there are no unilateral board positions, and every board has different bylaws and membership requirements, the process for citizens to become board members was previously convoluted and difficult to navigate.

"There was no centralized place for the public to apply," says City Clerk LaTonda Simmons. "Citizens had to go to the government offices to fill out an application, and it was a different location depending on which board or commission they were applying for. It was a huge undertaking as a manual process."

Now, with Boards and Commissions, everything is in one centralized place. Clerk staff and the departments in charge of the individual boards have the ability to make each application different to fit its membership requirements. Everything from a data collection standpoint is stored in one place, and citizens are able to access all of the applications from a single point on the City's website rather than jumping from site to site.

From a management and upkeep perspective, the system also helps with tracking the various terms of each member and alerts City staff to upcoming

term endings. In this way, staff's ability to stay on top of things has increased.

Finally, for many of the boards, there is a liaison who manages the members and their terms. This person is responsible for making sure that the City is aware of the activities of the various boards and commissions. Having an application like Boards and Commissions has made managing this process easier also, since it allows the City to track terms instead of just relying on the liaisons.

"At the end of the day, the public just wants the information in one place. They want to be able to get to it," Simmons said. "And Granicus did that despite how it is inside of the organization."

Simmons believes this system will change the public's view of Boards and Commissions, and that more citizens will want to get involved because the application process is no longer intimidating or inconvenient.

"We are more effective because of it," Simmons says, "and we meet the needs of the public in a more dynamic way than we were doing before."

