

**From:** John  
**Sent:** Friday, September 09, 2016 10:00 AM  
**To:** Gosse, Roxanne  
**Cc:** Rudy, Jo-Anne  
**Subject:** For distribution: CCS Meeting Sept. 12 Agenda Item 4.2 Electronic vote system  
**Importance:** Low

The right of councillors and the mayor to request a recorded vote is absolute. This right is executed at the discretion of members, providing them with the opportunity to underscore a vote they feel is of enough significance to have our clerk record the names and votes of their colleagues without question or debate. When used in that context it has, and will continue to serve members, residents and the city well.

Advocates of recorded votes often state transparency, accountability and their right to know how their councillor's vote as reasons for recording their votes, all good reasons that currently exist in our system. For recorded votes we provide, the name of the member requesting the vote, members votes are visually obvious and their name is verbally stated. The record of that information is found in both the meeting minutes and a video of council proceedings. All of this information is found on the city web site where recent improvements have made it extremely user friendly and easy to find.

Since our current system already provides the characteristics most often desired by recorded vote advocates, the discussion appears only to be the need, or not, to automatically record all votes electronically, some go as far as suggesting the theatrics of a large screen to display each vote.

Recording all votes seems excessive as many are procedural and of little interest or significance. Other than the result, do we need to know who voted to adjourn the meeting?

Electronically recording votes on request and limiting them to specific types of motions could simplify the process for our clerk to record members votes and improve the flow of council meetings however, the effect on the transparency or accountability we now enjoy would be minimal.

Toronto is one of the few municipalities that uses an electronic recording system, that experience provides us with some insight as to what we might expect.

In Toronto's description of the data, votes are recorded on request and the record is available at the same time as the minutes of the meeting. Recorded votes can only be requested on specific types of motions, those votes, when requested are recorded as Yes, No or Absent.

This information is considered transparent, accountable and provides a method to review a member's vote however, there is nothing to inform a resident of their member's perspective. Very often that perspective is far more important than the vote they cast, something a Yes, No or Absent record doesn't convey.

Recording a members vote in this manner results in a resident that is no further informed than viewing the same information contained in the minutes of the meeting. As with our current system, a review of a members perspective would still be required to develop an informed opinion.

The record created by Toronto only manages to duplicate the same, already available, information in a different format and would do little to enhance the transparency or accountability of our existing system.

The recorded vote taken to approve our current budget is an example of how incomplete information can unintentionally distort the perspective or intent of a member. Looking at the record of that vote, it reveals five councillors and the mayor had voted Yes to a budget that increased my taxes with one councillor not in favour, registering a No.

Assuming I did not like my taxes raised, and I didn't, my opinion of the members voting Yes would be negative and could influence my view, even my vote at the next election. If I looked a little further by simply watching the video of the council meeting, I would hear the perspective of each councillor and the mayor.

I still didn't like my taxes raised however, I could make a more informed assessment of why some voted Yes, helping me form a positive view of their position, as positive as paying more tax would allow, while still appreciating the No vote.

There are some who are suggesting a member should have the right to request a recorded vote at committee.

Committee votes have very important distinctions from council votes, they can be changed and are only recommendations for council's consideration.

Currently, recorded votes are not available at committee and should remain that way to allow members the flexibility and discretion to reconsider their position prior to a final vote at council. Recording committee votes and the inevitable comparison to council votes has the potential to further distort the members perspective, requiring

An electronic vote recording system could enhance our method of recording requested votes however, care should be taken that it doesn't simply duplicate available information or create a Yes, No or Absent lens without connection to the often detailed, even passionate perspective of the members.

Committee members that may have questions of this opinion are welcome to send them to the above email, I will reply ASAP.

Cheers : John Was