STAFF REPORT
City of Lancaster, California

Date: August 14, 2007

To: Mayor Hearns and City Council Members

From: Anne Aldrich, Communications Manager

Subject: **Proposal for Video Broadcasting and Webstreaming of
               City Council & Planning Commission Meetings**

Recommendation:
A) Approve cable casting and webstreaming City Council meetings and Planning Commission meetings to make them accessible to as many residents as possible and to give our residents choices of how to receive information.

B) Approve and appropriate $131,853.00 for implementation and training and $24,000.00 for eight months of operation to record City Council and other public meetings on video media and broadcast on Cable Television and City Website. Total Appropriation: $155,853.00 Source of funding: FY 2007-2008 Communications Division Professional Services Account (Account number 101-4305-301). Upon approval, funds will be transferred to that account from the General Fund fund balance.

Fiscal Impact:
Estimated cost to the City is approximately $131,853.00 to initiate and $3,000.00 monthly for ongoing operations. The initial expense breaks down to $67,500.00 to equip the City Council Chambers, $42,353.00 in distribution expenses for broadcasting on cable television and the City website and $22,000.00 for training. The monthly expense breaks down to $1,500.00 for personnel to maintain, update and operate the system at each meeting and $1,500.00 for the webstreaming monthly service. This represents a total of $155,853.00 for the 2007-2008 fiscal year and $36,000.00 per year in subsequent years. These costs are further detailed later in this staff report.

Background:
City governments around the nation are embracing a move toward being more transparent in their workings and proceedings. One of the methods of increasing citizen understanding and participation in City decision-making processes is to televise public meetings, and to make them available for viewing from City websites. In addition to Council meetings, some cities are offering citizens the opportunity to watch the proceedings of other decision-making bodies by televising those meetings on a cable channel and/or streaming video from the City website.

If Council meetings were broadcast on the City website, it could potentially increase the number of people who can learn and understand the complex decisions that are often the topic of discussion. It also provides a research tool to interested citizens on any topic discussed by the City Council. There are two routes to bring City Council Meetings into people's homes. The website options feature "annotated minutes". This would show viewers where they are in the agenda and would allow effective and searchable video and Council Minute archiving. Cable Television options would allow convenient viewing from any Time Warner subscribed television.

Our recommendations come as a result of meeting with Time Warner Cable and with Granicus, a web-streaming company with more than 160 successful experiences with cities around the nation. An example of their work at the level we are recommending can be viewed at the LaPalma, CA website http://www.lapalmacalifornia.com. Much of the research leading to the recommendation reflects the experiences of the Cities of Carlsbad, Long Beach, Pismo Beach and Palmdale.

Education: The communications and video presentation educational component is from one of the top firms working with public agencies in the State of California. Individualized sessions and on-camera training will provide specific strategies for successful communication on camera for the City Council Members and eight management staff members who regularly make presentations at public meetings. The cost for the training as an average per trainee is $1,693.00 for a total appropriation of $22,000.

Equipping City Council Chambers: Some cable equipment was included in the original construction of the Council Chambers, greatly reducing the potential cost of preparing for video broadcasting of public meetings. Adding additional webcasting hardware ($6,000); additional lighting ($4,000); and four basic cameras ($5,000 each) which are programmable to supply wide angle images of the Dais, the podium, audience and the Directors; installing a basic control room ($27,500); a digital processor to interface with channel 28 ($6,000) and the additional cables, and miscellaneous connections and adaptations ($4,000) should cost approximately $67,500.00 (12 weeks implementation from approval to operation)

Operational Expenses: Monthly support and maintenance of the system and staffing for up to 38 meetings per year will be provided under contract with Visual Image Productions for $1,500.00 per month or $18,000.00 per year.

Distribution Expenses:

- **Cable**: The meetings will be broadcast live on the City's public access cable channel and rebroadcast at times we specify. Cable broadcasting on Time Warner will require no additional expense as this service is included in the City franchise agreement with Time Warner. (Two weeks to implement after equipment installation.)

- **Video Stream City Council and Planning Commission meetings live and on-demand on the City of Lancaster Website**: The Lancaster City Council meetings would be broadcast live via streaming video. The live broadcast will be presented on a City of Lancaster branded web page. During the live broadcast, users will be able to view the current agenda item, agenda document and agenda packet documents. After the meetings are over, an on-demand copy of the meeting will be automatically published to the city's web site. This on-demand archive will be indexed by agenda item, linked with all associated documents and searchable by key word. The City will also receive 50 hours of storage for non-meeting related video content. The recommendation also includes software for the clerk's department which could save the clerk's office significant time when preparing meeting minutes. The recommendation also contains a module (MediaVault) that would allow the city to store a copy of all the video on the city's network. The cost of video streaming with annotated minutes is approximately $42,353.00 initially, which includes all software, training and implementation of webstreaming services, and $1500 monthly (six weeks to implement after equipment installation).