

PRESS RELEASE



County Council

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Lights, action, camera – transparency

Webcasting the County Council Starts in February

In five or six weeks the Snohomish County Council will be streaming across the Internet, bringing its meetings live to the curious and concerned from Darrington to Woodway. The target rollout for webcasting the council is Feb. 1.

The county council last month approved a contract with San Francisco-based Granicus, Inc. to provide streaming media and efficient long-term record keeping products to the county.

From governments as large as the Arizona legislature and the City of Los Angeles to the comparatively modest size of Mountlake Terrance, Granicus provides live and archived access to government proceedings and records to over 300 entities nationwide. To date, 14 government entities in Washington already or will soon offer similar webcasting services.

“We are responding eagerly and creatively to the citizens who endorsed the county’s Charter Review Commission’s proposition to greatly expand public access to the schedules, documents and the deliberations of county government,” said Council Chair Dave Gossett.

“This is a great new service that allows everyone to easily follow the nuts and bolts of the legislative process from home or business computers,” said Gossett.

According to Granicus, its products “capture, store, manage and distribute live and on-demand audio and video broadcasts of public functions to help government maximize democratic transparency, engage their constituents, more efficiently manage public records, and improve public communications.”

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All the council's public hearings and committee meetings will be broadcast live using cameras fixtures that were built into the council meeting room when the new county administration building was constructed several years ago. The cameras are fixed and do not require operators.

Granicus has already produced a web page interface modeled on the county web design. Users looking up past meetings will be able to scroll through meeting agendas co-located on the web page to find subjects of interest. Clicking on the agenda entry then brings up the video of the appropriate portion of the meeting. A sophisticated research option allows for key word searches of all archived meetings and documents.

"There are many opportunities within county government to make use of this technology, said Gossett. "Ultimately, we could broadcast meetings of other county boards, such as the planning commission."

The Granicus product can be used to deliver public service announcements, including critical information in an emergency. The system can also provide on-demand training opportunities for county employees. The system comes with a one-time installation charge of \$54,000 and a \$2,100 monthly subscription fee.

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