

## **Public Testimony, November 13, 2020**

Lisa Jeanne Graf

My name is Lisa Jeanne Graf and I am an education and disability rights activist.

A couple of years ago I was responsible for taking notes at City Council meetings for an internship at city hall, with a focus on the city budget. As I take in information best through reading I requested powerpoint files, and city budget documents as resources. Although all this information was useful it didn't include the words spoken by city councilors about the budget. I could watch videos of city council meetings and read the closed captioning but if I wanted to take notes I had to freeze frames and write down what was said. It was a slow and tedious process.

The transcripts from the closed captioning from these meetings were posted on the Boston.gov website but were often delayed. The transcripts also had a good number of typos but were at least quicker to read and work with.

Currently these transcripts are no longer posted online. To read them you have to request them.

Moving forward I have some recommendations.

To start with, I request that the text from closed captioning be included on the Boston.gov website. Ideally the text would include time stamps so that accuracy of the text could easily be cross checked with the videos of the meetings.

I would also be interested to learn if the stenographer's record could be converted into readable text, that could be posted on the Boston.gov website. I would imagine that approach would have less typos. It would also make it easier to create translations into more languages.

These requested changes would be beneficial to residents with hearing loss, and audio processing challenges. These changes would also benefit activists and journalists as it would be easier to get quotes from politicians at city meetings. This would help keep elected politicians accountable, and help them do their jobs through having a more engaged public.

Thank you for your time.