San Leandro City Council considers plan to put its meetings on local TV cable channel

By Amy Sylvestri

San Leandro Times

It will soon be lights, camera, action for the San Leandro City Council – they plan to begin filming and broadcasting all of their meetings.

Currently, audio of the meetings is available streaming on the internet, but soon the meetings will be available on public access cable channels 15 and 99.

Filming the meetings will mean cameras and new lighting and audio equipment will need to be installed in the council chambers and someone will need to man the camera, and the project is

now being put up for bids.

The video project is part of the Public Education and Government (PEG) objective that the Federal Communications Commission has created along with cable providers. For the past two years, anyone with Comcast or AT&T cable has had 1 percent of their bill go into the PEG funding and currently San Leandro has $179,000 in the PEG budget.

“The PEG objective is to increase transparency and most cities have audio and video,” assistant city manager Lianne Marshall told the council.

In fact, San Leandro is the last city in Alameda County to not have video of meetings available.

“It feels like we are a little behind,” said Councilwoman Ursula Reed.

Marshall said that the city currently spends about $18,000 per year on the audio recordings and the PEG money can’t go into the general fund. She said one cheaper option would be using

college interns to run the video or they could hire Comcast, which would be more expensive.

The council agreed to move forward with the project, but Councilman Michael Gregory called himself “ambivalent” because he believes better technology is on the horizon and Councilman Jim Prola was skeptical about adding video when the audio of the meetings isn’t currently of great quality.

But Mayor Stephen Cassidy said that having video hopefully within the year is important as the city is building an image as a leader in technology.

“We are trying to be an innovative city with Lit San Leandro (the internet broadband loop) but we are the last in the county with transparent City Council meetings,” Cassidy said.