

## MODERN LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT

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Modern techniques in managing your locality's Legislative process are ready and available. The Legislative process should be recognized as a core business process just like any other and one that may be in need of an overhaul. Technology has made significant strides over the years and the focus now is on how to leverage it. By doing so, transparency can be improved through public access, and efficiency can be gained in drafting and tracking legislation from the beginning of the process to the end of the process when it is sent to the codifier and archived to a Records Management system.

### Electronic Systems for Legislative Management

Open government and improved transparency are benefits of implementing an Electronic Legislative Management system. For example, when items are drafted and tracked electronically from the very beginning, information can be made available at any stage of the process. If certain groups and /or the public needs to see all items that are in draft or pending status so that they know what legislation is being proposed, the information can easily be made available prior to items being included on an upcoming agenda. In addition, the new electronic options to handling the Legislative process allow for posting any level of detail to the public, such as agendas with all associated supporting attachments, minutes of meetings with actions and votes taken, and even linkages from specific pieces of legislation to audio/video from the actual meeting.

Most city/county government agencies currently utilize a paper intensive and/or very manual approach to Legislative management. The current process is extremely time consuming and full of opportunities to “drop the ball”. There is no consistent way to submit draft items to the process, or to get them approved to go on an upcoming agenda, let alone a system for tracking the items as they move through the approval process. Public access is likely limited to making the agenda available on the web at the last minute and search tools are typically lacking as well. Living in a world where we are faced with doing more with less each and every day, doing things the same way is becoming unaffordable. By leveraging technology to automate the Legislative process, we can gain efficiency in drafting individual pieces of Legislation / Agenda items. We can also streamline reporting needs, compilation of meeting documents such as agenda hearing notices, agendas, minutes, voting records, certified copies, etc, and we can do a much better job providing constituents with the information they need, when they need it.

Looking into the future, imagine an experience where the public can sign up for RSS feeds that will notify them when the content or status of an agenda item and/or meeting has changed; an environment where the city/county has the option to allow the public to let the voting body know if they are in favor of or against a particular issue; an environment of improved transparency and public access. These are just some of the things that an electronic Legislative system is also capable of.

### Codification

Codification of your ordinances plays a major role in Legislative Management. In the early years codifications were prepared as hardcopy permanently bound volumes, but it was quickly determined there needs to be some way to keep the codification up-to-date without having to publish a companion

volume of amendments. The next generation codification was introduced as a loose-leaf volume which allowed the codifications to be updated a page at a time therefore saving the client money and publication time. These different generations of codifications were a form of Legislative Management.

The “Modern Legislative Management” of a codification allows the codification to be in a hardcopy format, CD, downloaded to the city’s network, HTML, PDF, and/or a totally searchable format and posted on the Internet. With the new technology available, your ordinances can be tracked through the entire approval process of adoption and then transferred to your codifier after adoption. If you decide to be totally paperless, the codification and future supplements can be delivered as electronic products that are printable and searchable. Modern Legislative Management is the beginning and end of the codification process. We always have to remember what goes on after the adoption and before the delivery of a codification and supplements; legal review, editorial review, proper organization, proofing, updating tables and indexing. Your codification is an ever changing document, but with Legislative Management it can be easily archived to reflect the law as adopted at different stages of the life of the codification. This can be a major timesaver when legislation has to be tracked to the letter of the law. Now is the time to include your codification as a part of your “Modern Legislative Management” system.

#### Archival & Records Management

At the end of any Legislative process there is a need for archival and records management. Many of the resulting documents are permanent such as ordinances and resolutions, while others have multiple retention schedules to adhere to. Not only must all of these documents be archived, but they must also be made accessible with robust search tools, and must be kept in a non-proprietary format to ensure that the data will always be accessible.

Over the past few years many of the government focused Document Imaging software providers have ramped up the records management capabilities of their respective software packages. The most recent certification is DoD 5015.2, and is the certification that the Department of Defense recognizes at the federal level. A DoD certified system ties records retention laws directly to record sets. With a DoD certified system, cities and counties can not only image and archive permanent records, but can also keep track of all the different retention schedules for any type of record, allowing full awareness of when records retention dates are met, when vital records need to be reviewed, etc.

While the majority of cities and counties have moved into the era of electronic imaging, applying records retention rules to imaged records is a new capability of most systems, and is something that should be asked of vendors.

*Municipal Code Corporation and MCCi will be conducting a full session on Modern Legislative Management during the upcoming IIMC annual conference in Chicago.*

*Municipal Code Corporation is the nation’s leading codifier, servicing over 3,000 city/county customers, with office locations in FL, TX, MI, and Seattle, Washington. [www.municode.com](http://www.municode.com) (800)262-2633*

*MCCi is a subsidiary of Municipal Code Corporation and focuses on implementing completely automated Legislative management systems. In addition, MCCi was recently recognized as the #1 rated Laserfiche provider, servicing over 350 local government accounts. [www.mccinnovations.com](http://www.mccinnovations.com) (800)342-2633*