

NOTE: This is an email response to an Iowa City resident that was concerned that a City Council Meeting had been altered due to an erroneous press report.

September 23, 2009

Mr. MacDonald,

Acting City Manager Dale Helling asked that I respond to your email regarding the City's policy on editing of public meetings and more specifically editing of the current Iowa City City Council meeting.

It is the City's policy that no public meeting, including city council meetings, will be edited for content. We do edit out the extraneous space at the beginning and end of the meeting, sometimes replace bad graphics and, as you speculated in your email, clean up segments of going to and returning from recesses.

Editing of content might occur if there was a clear legal or public safety issue concerning a specific video segment. But in that event our guidelines require that any editing of content be graphically indicated in the video in the space where the segment was altered. In the almost twenty years I have been responsible for Iowa City City Council Meetings I have never been asked or required to alter content.

In the matter of the current Iowa City City Council meeting, the specific segments you refer to as edited were directly related to a recess taken by Council. The Editor selected to use a brief dissolve between the end of the first segment and the beginning of the next segment. This is a standard editing device used in news, documentary and other reality video productions to indicate the brief passage of time. It was done, to use your description, for "expediency." No significant video or audio related to the verbal exchange that is found in the original recording was removed or altered. At the same time, I did find the transition a little too tight. For this reason I required the video of the Mayor's calls for a recess and return to business to be restored in the program with a dissolve to and from black in between. In the future, this will be our standard for recess transitions.

I would also like to mention that the video you can currently view on our channel or webpage is the exact same video you would have seen live the night of the meeting. No video shots were altered or removed. Our coverage strategy is to "follow the action" and to focus on the person that has the floor. We only change our shot when it is clear the control of the floor has changed. At the time of the verbal exchange, the camera was on the person at the podium where it remained. The exchange between the speaker and the Councilpersons was too brief to dictate a change of camera view by the director.

I hope my comments have answered your questions and relieved your concern that Iowa City's public meetings are being altered. If you have any additional questions please do not hesitate to contact me at this email or to call me at 319-356-5047.

Sincerely,

Bob Hardy
Cable Television Administrator
City of Iowa City

cc: Dale Helling
Iowa City City Council
ICTC