



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Town of Wrentham
Board of Selectmen
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February 6, 2018

Remote Participation Policy

I. Applicability

This policy shall apply to all Town Committees, Commissions, Sub-committee and any other groups; whether appointed or elected; that are subject to the provisions of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c.30A, §§ 18-25.

The policy is authorized by the Board of Selectmen in accordance with the requirements of 940 CMR 29.10 and applies to all subsequent meetings of all local bodies in Wrentham unless an opt out vote is taken by an individual body per the procedures described in Section IV below.

II. Purpose

This policy is implemented to allow for remote participation at meetings subject to the Open Meeting Law for those individuals who are not able to attend when specific circumstances prevent them from physically being present. It only applies to members of elected or appointed Boards, Commissions, Committees or Sub-committees. It is not a means for non-members to participate.

III. Policy

The Board of Selectmen through this policy authorize individuals serving on elected or appointed Boards, Committees, Commissions, Sub-committees and any other groups that are subject to the Open Meeting Law to participate remotely at meetings only if physical attendance would be unreasonably difficult.

A quorum of the body, including the Chair or, in the Chair's absence, the person authorized to chair the meeting, shall be physically present at the meeting location, as required by M.G.L. c.30A sec.20(D).

Members of public bodies who participate remotely may vote and shall not be deemed absent for the purposes of M.G.L. c.39, sec.23(D).

The amount and source of payment for any costs associated with remote participation shall be determined by the Board of Selectmen.

IV. Procedure

a. Preparation

Any member of a public body who wishes to participate remotely shall, as soon as reasonably possible prior to the meeting, notify the Chair or person chairing the meeting of his or her desire to do so and the reason for and facts supporting his or her request.

When feasible, the Chair or, in the Chair's absence, the person chairing the meeting, shall distribute to remote participants, in advance of the meeting, copies of any documents or exhibits that he or she reasonable anticipates will be used during the meeting. If used during the meeting, such documents shall be part of the official record of the meeting, and shall be listed in the meeting minutes retained in accordance with M.G.L. c.30A, sec.22.

Prior to the meeting the Board, Committee, Commission, or Sub-committee Chair or designated individual person at the direction of the Chair shall take every effort to ensure the equipment is available and functioning properly. If the required equipment is not available, then the Chair shall deny the request for remote participation.

The following media are acceptable methods for remote participation. Remote participation by any other means is not permitted. Accommodations shall be made for any public body member who requires TTY service, video relay service, or other form of adaptive communications.

- Telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio ~~or~~ and video conferencing; (last statement, of these three, requires some form of video conference)
- Any other technology that enable the remote participant and all persons present at the meeting location to be clearly audible to one another.
- When video technology is in use, the remote participant shall be clearly visible to all persons present in the meeting location.

b. Execution

At the start of the meeting, the Chair shall announce the name of the member who will be participating remotely and the reason for his or her remote participation. This information shall also be recorded in the minutes.

Members of the public body who participate remotely and all persons present at the Meeting location shall be clearly audible to each other.

All votes taken during any meeting in which a member participates remotely shall be by roll call vote.

Remote participants shall preserve the confidentiality of the executive session. The remote participant shall state at the start of any such session that they are not in a location accessible to other persons, that no other person is present and/or able to hear the discussion at the remote location, unless presence of that person is approved by simply majority vote of the public body, and that the session is not being remotely recorded by any device.

The focus of the Chair should always be on maintaining the flow of the meeting. If the Chair determines that technical difficulties are inhibiting the progress of the meeting, the Chair may elect to terminate the participation of the remote member.

If technical difficulties arise as a result of utilizing remote participation being disconnected from the meeting, that fact and the time at which the disconnection occurred and subsequent reconnection if achieved shall be noted in the meeting minutes.

If a public hearing occurs after disconnection, the member shall be noted as absent.

V. Exceptions

Due to the need to engage with certain documents, actively dialog with audience members, or other constraints; Remote Participation may not be feasible for all Boards, Commissions, or Committees at all times; and as such, any body may "opt out" of Remote Participation for any or all meetings by a simple majority vote. Bodies may later "opt in" if circumstances should change, again by simple majority vote.

Remote Participation is intended to be used only when physical participation is unreasonably difficult and is not intended to replace physical participation. Individual member use of Remote Participation is restricted to a limited number of occurrences per election year ("election year" is defined as starting the first Tuesday of April of the given year to the first Tuesday of April the following year) as follows:

- Bodies meeting on averaged more than two times per month, any individual may use Remote Participation no more than 4 times per election year.
- Bodies meeting on average two or fewer times per month, any individual may use Remote Participation no more than 2 3 times per election year.
- For those requesting Remote Participation for reasons of personal disability, family need/situations or military service, an exception to these limits may be granted annually by simple majority vote of the respective body.




Jerome McGovern



Charles Kennedy



Stephen J. Langley



Joseph F. Botaish, II

Gerard J. Nolan