

Guidance for Conducting Electronic Meetings During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

The purpose of the document is to provide guidance to Administrative Points of Contact for Boards and Commissions (APC) regarding electronic meetings that occur during the public health emergency (PHE) for coronavirus (COVID-19).

The COVID-19 Response Emergency Amendment Act of 2020 (the “Act”) allows any board, commission, or other public body to waive its meeting requirement during the time of a PHE, unless otherwise directed by the Mayor to meet.

Electronic Meeting Notice Requirements:

- The public must be provided with notice 48 hours, or two business days, whichever is greater, before the meeting on the public body’s website and/or the central meeting calendar.
- If it is an emergency meeting, post as soon as you know you are having a meeting.
- Notice must include time, date, planned agenda, and call-in or login information. The notice must state if part of the meeting is closed to the public and note the reason for closure.
- Physical posting at the public body’s office or any other physical location is not required during a PHE.
- If a public body is cancelling a meeting due to the PHE, notice of the cancellation must be provided on the public body’s website and/or the central meeting calendar as soon as possible, but no less than 48 hours or two business days, whichever is greater, before the scheduled meeting date.

Online Meeting Requirements and Best Practices:

- **Holding a Meeting:** The Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) has offered free WebEx accounts to DC Government employees to host electronic meetings during the PHE. If a public body intends to have an electronic meeting during the PHE, the APC should set up a WebEx account through OCTO. For more information and instructions, visit: <https://remote.dc.gov/OCTOWebExQuickGuide.html>
- **Before the meeting:** APC must require boards and commission members (the “Members”) and staff to login to the online meeting using their e-mail address and name. Other participants may call in using the telephone number and meeting number you provide. Mute everyone on the meeting except the members and APC. Members should NOT be in a central location due to DC Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s recommendations to limit gatherings. So, the meeting must be completely remote. If your bylaws do not permit your public body to have a fully remote meeting, the meeting should be cancelled due to the PHE, unless otherwise directed by the Mayor.
- **During the meeting:** Chairperson must state the date and time in his or her call to order and state that it is an electronic meeting. If the meeting is an emergency meeting, the Chairperson must state the nature of the emergency at the start of the meeting. Members should announce

their presence on the call by stating their name. The Chairperson should state there is quorum based on the announcements. All votes must be by roll call: the APC or Chairperson should read the name of each member and the member will respond with a yes or no vote. If allowing public comment, the APC will unmute all the participants when the Chairperson directs. If no one is commenting, they can re-mute themselves.

- **Executive Sessions:**

If an executive session is needed, we recommend that you have two separate online meetings. Remember that a roll call vote for an executive session is needed in a public meeting before closing the meeting to members only, even in a virtual or electronic setting. Once the Chairperson announces the start of the executive session, members should login to the second online meeting for the executive session, which is a private meeting. Logistically, the APC must continue the public meeting for the duration of the executive session (don't end the public online meeting). At the end of Executive Session, the Members should reenter the public online meeting and report back any required items and then adjourn.

Recordings:

The Act has paused, or tolled, the time period for making a copy of the recording available during the PHE. We recommend that you make them available as soon as possible after the meeting.