

# VLCT REMOTE ONLY PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL HEARING CHECKLIST

Please use this checklist to help prepare and conduct the public informational hearing required when holding town meeting by Australian ballot if the legislative body decides to conduct the hearing by remote access only. Unlike town meeting, which is a meeting of the voters, an informational hearing is a meeting of a public body (i.e., the selectboard). Consequently, it must comply with the requirements of the Open Meeting Law.

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## IN ADVANCE OF HEARING

- Provide advance public notice of hearing. See VLCT Model Remote Only Public Informational Hearing Notice and Agenda.
- Create and post an agenda for the hearing. See VLCT Model Remote Only Public Informational Hearing Notice and Agenda.
  - Include information on how the public can access the hearing electronically and provide a contact for troubleshooting technical difficulties.
  - Recommend advertising instructions in additional ways to foster accessibility.
  - At least 10 days in advance of the hearing:
    - post in or near town clerk's office,
    - post in at least two other public places in town,
- Pick a technology that allows people to attend electronically, such as Zoom, Skype, and/or conference call system.
- Set up remote hearing to enable everyone to hear and be heard throughout.
- Determine process for managing remote access.

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## START OF HEARING

- Assign administrator(s) to monitor chat/participation features. This person should not be the minutes taker.
- If possible, mute participants, or ask them to mute their microphones unless invited to speak. To take questions, make sure the chat feature is enabled.
- Advise participants that hearing is being recorded (if applicable).
- Confirm that members can hear each other and the public.
- Consider reading the VLCT Script for Remote Only Public Informational Hearings.

- Note where materials for hearing are available.
  - Introduce all members of the selectboard, staff, and people on the agenda.
  - State that the hearing will be conducted in accordance with the selectboard’s Rules of Procedure.
  - Cover “ground rules” for participation, such as:
    - speakers must state their name before each presentation, comment, or question.
    - all participants must be recognized by the (*selectboard chair/moderator*) before speaking.
    - etc.
  - End remote hearing when selectboard adjourns.
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#### TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

- If technical difficulties arise, the (*selectboard chair/moderator*) should temporarily suspend (i.e. recess) the hearing until issues are resolved.
  - If technical difficulties cannot be resolved so that the hearing cannot be held in compliance with VT’s Open Meeting Law, continue hearing to a date, time, and place certain within any of the 10 days preceding the meeting at which the Australian ballot system is to be used.
  - Keep accurate minutes noting any disconnections and reconnections of members.
  - If public is experiencing technical difficulties, refer them to hearing software guidance or assign someone to provide remote technical assistance.
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#### AFTER HEARING

- Post the minutes.
  - Vermont law requires hearing minutes be posted no later than five (5) calendar days from the date of the meeting to an official website, if one exists, that is maintained or has been designated as the official website of the selectboard.