VLCT REMOTE ONLY PUBLIC MEETING CHECKLIST

Please use this checklist to help prepare and conduct remote meetings of public bodies in accordance with the Open Meeting Law.

IN ADVANCE OF MEETING

☐ First, pick the software/technology that your public body will use that will allow people to attend and participate electronically such as Zoom, Skype, or a conference call system.

☐ Provide advance public notice of meetings. See VLCT Model Remote Only Meeting Notice and Agenda.
  ▪ Regular meetings: One time in a charter, local ordinance, or resolution.
  ▪ Special meetings: Provide at least 24 hours' notice to:
    ▪ all members orally or in writing (unless waived),
    ▪ news media serving the area (no publication required),
    ▪ any person who requests notification,
    ▪ in or near Town Clerk’s office and two other public places in town (or two designated electronic locations, or a combination of a designated electronic location and a designated public place); and
    ▪ provide a copy to the newspapers of general circulation for the municipality, if it was electronically posted (no publication required).
  ▪ Emergency Meetings: no specific requirement - "some public notice must be given as soon as possible before any such meeting."

☐ Create and post an agenda for all regular and special meetings (not required for emergency meetings). See VLCT Model Remote Only Meeting Notice and Agenda.
  ▪ Include information on how the public can access and participate the meeting electronically and provide a contact for troubleshooting technical difficulties.
  ▪ Recommend advertising instructions in additional ways to foster accessibility.
  ▪ At least 48 hours in advance of regular meeting and 24 hours in advance of special meeting:
    ▪ post in or near town office,
    ▪ post in at least two other public places in town (or two designated electronic locations, or a combination of a designated electronic location and a designated public place),
- post electronically to a website, if one exists, that is maintained or has been designated as the official website,
- make available to a person prior to a meeting upon specific request, and
- provide a copy to the newspapers of general circulation for the municipality, if it was electronically posted (no publication required).

☐ Set up remote meeting to enable everyone to hear and be heard throughout.
☐ Determine process for managing remote access.

START OF MEETING

☐ 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 audio and/or chat feature is enabled.

☐ Advise participants that meeting is being recorded (if a legislative body meeting).

☐ Confirm that members can hear each other and the public.

☐ Consider reading the VLCT Script for Opening a Remote Only Meeting of a Public Body.

☐ Note where materials for meeting are available.

☐ Introduce all members of the public body, staff, and persons on the agenda.

☐ State that meeting will be conducted in accordance with public body’s Rules of Procedure.

☐ Cover “ground rules” for participation, such as:
  - speakers should state their name before each presentation, comment, or question.
  - all votes that are not unanimous must be taken by roll call (if one or more members attend by electronic or other means).
  - all participants must be recognized by the Chair before speaking.
  - etc.

☐ End remote meeting when public body adjourns.

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

☐ If technical difficulties arise, the Chair should temporarily suspend (i.e. recess) the meeting until issues are resolved.

☐ If technical difficulties cannot be resolved so that the meeting cannot be held in compliance with VT’s Open Meeting Law, continue meeting to a date, time, and place certain.
☐ Keep accurate minutes noting any disconnections and reconnections of members.

☐ If public is experiencing technical difficulties, refer them to meeting software guidance or assign someone to provide remote technical assistance.

AFTER MEETING
☐ Post the minutes.

- Vermont law requires meeting 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 public body. In the event of a staffing shortage due to COVID-19, a public body may extend the time limit for the posting of minutes to not more than ten (10) days from the date of the meeting.