



## POLICY

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<b>Council &amp; Committees of Council Virtual Meeting Policy</b>	
<b>Policy Number:</b> 110-014	<b>Supersedes Policy Number:</b> Not Applicable
<b>Effective Date:</b> 2022-09-27	<b>Approved by Council Motion Number:</b> 24-09-2022

### 1.0 Purpose

The Town of Wolfville (**the "Town"**) is committed to providing a work environment that promotes the safety of members of the public, Council members and staff, while minimizing disruption to workflow, maintaining transparency and accountability during decision making processes.

The COVID-19 pandemic which affected Nova Scotia at the beginning of 2020, provided opportunity to seek alternative, safe and secure solutions to enable meetings of Council and the work of the Town, Council and their Committees to continue with minimal interruption, in an off-site setting, maintaining transparency and providing increased accessibility options for all.

While it is preferred that Council and Committee of Council members and staff meet in person as much as possible, it is understood circumstances exist where this may not be possible for everyone. This policy enables the **Town** to continue to offer virtual/hybrid meeting options to Councillors, Citizen Committee members, staff and members of the public enabling full participation in Council and Committees of Council meetings virtually (by video conference).

Meetings of Council which this policy applies to are:

- Town Council Meetings (including Special Meetings of Council)
- Committee of the Whole
- Accessibility Committee
- Audit Committee
- Planning Advisory Committee
- RCMP Advisory Committee
- Source Water Protection Committee
- Any other Committee of Council formed as per the Committees of Council Policy #110-001



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The procedural requirements in this Policy are intended to complement and supplement, and not to replace, the requirements contained in the ***Municipal Government Act***.

### 2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all members of Council and Committees of Council (including citizen members), members of the public and staff.

### 3.0 References

3.1 *Municipal Government Act*, R.S.N.S. 1998, c.19A:

### 4.0 Definitions

**“Town”** means the Town of Wolfville

**“Council”** means the Council of the Town of Wolfville

**“Council member(s)”** include(s) the Mayor

**“Citizen member(s)”** mean citizen committee members

**“Committees of Council”** means the advisory committees as referenced in our Committees of Council Policy

**“virtual”** means video conference

**“hybrid”** means a mix of virtual and in person participants

**“accommodation”** means adjustment made in method of meeting participation to allow for individual needs

**“Ad Hoc”** means a meeting not in the approved Committees of Council/Council meeting Calendar.

### 5.0 Policy

#### 5.1 Public Notice

In accordance with the Municipal Government Act, a Council meeting or Committee of Council meeting may take place virtually if, at least two days prior to the meeting, notice is given to the public respecting the way in which the meeting is to be conducted.

The notice to the public will be given by advertising:

- i. on the Town’s publicly accessible Internet site; and
- ii. on the Town’s social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.



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Notwithstanding section 5.1, where the Mayor determines that there is an emergency, a meeting may be conducted virtually without notice or with such notice as is possible in the circumstances.

### **5.2 Virtual Attendance at Meetings**

Where virtual attendance has **not** previously been approved by accommodation upon commencement of council term or employment of staff, Council and staff may request to attend a meeting virtually in accordance with any attendance policies in place.

Except where meetings have been set ad hoc, Council may attend no more than 3 meetings virtually per year.

The Chair may request an all-virtual meeting should the number of participants approved to attend virtually cause a challenge to hold an effective hybrid meeting and by providing one weeks' notice.

#### **5.2.1 Request to Attend Virtually**

##### **Members of Council**

Where virtual attendance at meetings has **not** previously been approved by accommodation, and is not in conflict with Attendance Policy for Council #110-012, a Council member wishing to attend a meeting virtually shall:

- i. notify the Mayor and CAO.
- ii. use equipment that allows all participants and viewing members of the public to see and hear them.

##### **Members of Staff**

Where virtual attendance at meetings has **not** previously been approved by accommodation on commencement of employment, a staff member (excluding the CAO) wishing to attend a meeting virtually shall:

- i. request to do so through the CAO and Town Clerk
- ii. have equipment that allows all participants and viewing members of the public to see and hear them if they are presenting at the meeting.



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Where virtual attendance at meetings has **not** previously been approved by accommodation on commencement of employment, the CAO wishing to attend a meeting virtually shall:

- i. request to do so through the Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- ii. have equipment that allows all participants and viewing members of the public to see and hear them if they are presenting at the meeting.

### **Citizen Committee Members & Members of the Public**

All citizen committee members and members of the public will be given the option of attending meetings virtually through the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk is to be made aware of all approved requests with no less than 24 hours' notice where possible, to allow for technical set up.

### **5.3 Town Equipment Requirements**

The Town is committed to providing a hybrid option for all meetings and will ensure:

- i. the electronic equipment enables all meeting participants to see and hear each other during the meeting.
- ii. a link to enable members of the public to participate in the meetings will be made available upon request.
- iii. a live streaming option will be available for observation in real time of Town Council and Committee of the Whole meetings only.

### **5.4 Recording Attendance of Council Members attending virtually**

Any Council member participating virtually in a meeting shall be deemed to be:

- i. present if approval has been granted for them to participate virtually under this Policy and in conjunction with Attendance Policy for Council #110-012
- ii. absent for any parts of the meeting in which a member is not permitted to participate virtually under this Policy and in conjunction with Attendance Policy for Council #110-012.



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### 5.5 Technological problems - failure to connect or disconnection

If technological problems prevent a Council or Citizen member of Council from participating in a meeting prior to the meeting commencing, said member shall be marked absent from the meeting.

If a Council or Citizen member of Council becomes disconnected from the meeting due to technical problems or other reasons, the minutes shall reflect that said member left the meeting at the time of the disconnection.

### 5.6 Secret Ballot Voting

Council members are unable to participate virtually, in any of the following:

- i. any part of a meeting during which the issue under discussion will be decided by a vote held by secret ballot.
- ii. vote held by secret ballot.

### 5.7 Code of Conduct

All Council and staff members who attend Council & Committee of Council meetings will read and sign a Code of Conduct for Virtual Meeting Participants (*see Appendix A*) confirming they have understood and will abide by the requirements laid out therein.

## 6.0 Review of Policy

The Town will review this Policy every four years.

2022-09-27

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CAO or Town Clerk

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Date



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### **Appendix A**

#### **Code of Conduct for Virtual Meeting Participants**

Participants attending meetings virtually shall have equipment that enables you to:

- Share your camera
- Mute/unmute microphone
- Share files
- Share your desktop/screen
- Send and read chat messages, if required

#### **Technical Requirements and Equipment**

It is recommended you test all technical requirements and equipment in advance to avoid disruption of the meeting.

- Stable and reliable Internet connection
- Audio (computer speakers, microphone, telephone, etc.)
- Webcam
- Headset required for In Camera portion of meetings.

#### **Technical considerations**

- Presenters (if presenting virtually) can consider using a microphone for better sound (headset, clip-on, desktop mic)
- It is preferred all presenters are in person.
- Decide how media will be displayed (and test it in advance) – share your screen/desktop.



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### Virtual meeting etiquette

- All Council members taking part in a meeting virtually shall have their cameras switched on for the entirety of the meeting.
- The Chair should let participants know when they will be able to make comments/ask questions during the meeting.
- Ask all participants to signal and wait a couple seconds before speaking to account for lagging time.
- Remind participants to be on mute, have webcam on and limit background noise and distractions as much as possible.
  
- For In Camera meetings, participants joining virtually **must**:
  - be alone unless with another participant of the meeting who has permission to attend.
  - Ensure no-one can see or hear you or other participants in the in-camera meeting if they are not an attendee of that portion of the meeting.

**No unauthorized recording of any meeting shall take place.**

**I have read, understood, and agree to abide by this Code of Conduct.**

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**Name**

**Signature**

**Date**