

SECTION: Administration		POLICY #: ADM- 019
Date Approved: May 4, 2020		Electronic Meeting Procedure Declared Provincial Emergency
Revision Date:	Review Date:	
Authority:		

1.0 PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for electronic meeting participation by members of council and committees of council in accordance with Section 238 (3.3) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* and to ensure transparency and accountability in the municipal decision-making processes. This policy also outlines the responsibilities of those administering and attending electronic meetings.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to members of Hanover council, committees of council and staff participating in a meeting electronically, either via video conference or telephone. This policy is subject to rules and procedures governing council and committees of council as stated in the Procedural By-law and/or other provincial legislation.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Declared Emergency – means an emergency declared pursuant to the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*.

Electronic Participation - means the use of communication technologies including, but not limited to, telephone, video or audio conferencing to permit participants to be involved in meetings as defined and in accordance with the Town of Hanover's Procedural By-law.

Participant(s) - means a member of council, committee of council, staff, delegation or other invited participant in an electronic meeting.

4.0 POLICY

Scheduling and Participation

- Municipalities are permitted to hold meetings with council, committees and local boards by way of electronic participation during an emergency declared pursuant to the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*.
- A member of council, committee of council or local board who is participating electronically in a meeting may be counted in determining whether or not a quorum of members is present at any point in time in accordance with Section 238 (3.3) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended.
- The method of participation may be by telephone conference call, video conference or other technology suitable to a majority of participants to facilitate electronic participation.
- There shall be no restriction on the frequency or consecutive number of meetings that each member of council, a committee or staff is allowed to participate in electronically during a declared emergency.
- The clerk or committee secretary shall ensure that information on how the public may access the meeting is provided on the meeting agenda and/or posted on the municipal or committee website.

- A member participating in a meeting electronically may declare a conflict of interest by emailing the completed declaration form to the clerk (or designate) in advance of the meeting and shall verbally state their conflict when the chair calls for declarations.
- An electronic meeting may include a closed session, which shall be conducted in the absence of the public and in accordance with Section 239 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* and the Town of Hanover's Procedural By-law.
- Participants shall connect to the meeting by electronic means at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to the commencement of the meeting.
- Each Member participating by electronic means shall inform the chair about his or her intentions to leave the meeting either on a temporary or permanent basis.
- When participating via video conference, council members shall have webcams turned on.
- Any member of council, a committee or staff participating by telephone shall state their name before speaking.
- A member of council or committee participating by telephone shall state their name before moving or seconding a motion.
- Participants making presentations to council or a committee by video conference may have their webcam on during their presentation only.
- When participating via video or telephone conference, all microphones should be muted unless the participant is speaking.
- Participants are responsible for ensuring that there is no background noise at their location that would interfere with the meeting and that a decorous background is visible.

Voting

- All council or committee members participating via video conference will vote by a show of hands.
- Each member of council or committee participating via telephone will be called upon by the chair to vote verbally.
- A participant, after declaring a conflict of interest pursuant to the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*, shall refrain from taking part in the discussion and from voting on the particular question. The participant shall also mute their audio device and close their video feed if applicable, until the matter subject to the conflict of interest is concluded. A participant declaring a conflict of interest during a closed a meeting shall disconnect from the video or telephone conference.

Delegations

- Delegations shall be permitted by electronic participation. The procedure for delegation requests and presentations as outlined in the Town of Hanover Procedure By-law shall be maintained.
- First and last names of delegates may be shown on the video conference live stream as they appear on the request to delegate submitted to the clerk.

Technical Matters

- Participants shall use their municipally-issued devices, if provided, to ensure proper connectivity and security. It is the responsibility of the participant to ensure adequate security and confidentiality if using a personal device.

- In the event of a connection/service interruption with a council or committee member participating electronically in the meeting, the chair may recess the meeting while attempts to reconnect with the participant are undertaken. Should the connectivity not be restored within 15 minutes, the meeting shall continue provided a quorum is retained.
- Should a connection/service interruption result in loss of quorum, the meeting shall be suspended until such time as the member can be reconnected. If a connection cannot be restored within 30 minutes the remainder of the meeting shall be rescheduled to another date and/or time.

Responsibilities

- Participants shall not share electronic meeting access information.
- When participating in a closed session by video conference all persons shall use headphones/earphones. Further, no person shall use speakerphones when connected to a closed session by telephone.
- The clerk (or designate) will be responsible for administering electronic meetings of council and ensuring quorum is maintained throughout the video and/or telephone conference.
- The clerk (or designate) will be responsible for guaranteeing the confidentiality of closed meeting proceedings by stopping the recording, broadcasting, and/or distribution of audio and/or video to all unauthorized participants prior to the commencement of a closed meeting. A break may be requested by the chair, clerk or designate to allow for the execution of privacy protocols.
- The clerk (or designate) shall ensure that a live video stream of the council meeting is available to members of the public on an appropriate social media platform to maintain transparency and accountability.
- Advisory committees of council shall designate a recorder/secretary to administer electronic meetings and ensure quorum is maintained throughout the video and/or telephone conference. The committee chair shall notify the clerk of the person so designated.

Chairperson

- The chair shall ensure that all members of council or a committee, regardless of the way they have joined the meeting, have equal opportunity to speak.