

# Teleconference and Online Meetings: Procedures and Suggestions for Local Advisory Committees

## Teleconference and Online Meeting Services:

- **Cost:** Many online meeting services cost money, and all require the meeting host (which can be anyone on the LAC) to register. Examples of these services include [GoToMeeting](#), [WebEx](#), [Zoom](#), [Google Hangouts](#), [Google Meet](#), and [FreeConferenceCall](#), but you can search online for 'Online Meeting Tools' or 'Conference Call Services' for other options. All of the paid online meeting options also include a conference call option, so that those without computer access can join the meeting by phone.
- **The free version of [Zoom](#) CAN NO LONGER BE USED FOR LAC MEETINGS.** The Right-to-Know Law requires that the public is able to join the meeting by phone, and Zoom no longer includes an audio-only call-in option on its free service. You can still use a paid version, however.
- [FreeConferenceCall](#) is free and works well, but occasionally their circuits get busy during popular meeting times due to the volume of calls. So if you use it, consider starting your meeting on the quarter or three quarter hour, such as at 6:45 or 7:15, to allow everyone to get on smoothly. Also, if you use the online option, suggest that attendees download the [desktop application](#) versus using the online version to improve the video conferencing.
- [WebEx](#) has a free basic plan with no meeting length limit, and the required audio-only call-in option.
- [Google Meet](#) has a free basic plan that always allows you to meet for one hour any time, and allows you to meet for up to 24 hours now through September 30, 2020. There is also an upgraded version allowing up to 150 participants that is free through September 30<sup>th</sup>.

## Required Procedures:

- 1) **Post a Meeting Notice:** If your LAC does not have its own website, email your meeting notice and call-in information to [Tracie](#) or [Jen](#) to post on the [LAC Forum](#), or to [Michele L. Tremblay](#) to post on the [LAC Meeting page](#) of the New Hampshire Rivers Council website.
  - **Required:** Conference call number and access code, plus a phone number for the public to call if they are having trouble connecting.
  - **Optional:** Online meeting link and/or a simple agenda and other meeting materials.
- 2) **The Public Must Be Able to Join the Meeting:** Members of the public must be able to connect to your meeting by phone. If someone is unable to connect, postpone the meeting until that can be arranged.
- 3) **Take an Initial Attendance Roll Call:** Meetings must include an initial attendance roll call at the beginning to establish both members and guests who are present. To avoid people speaking over one another, designate one person to do the member roll call, with each member responding verbally to their name, then inviting any guests to introduce themselves.
- 4) **Vote on Each Motion by a Roll Call:** Each motion must be voted on by roll call. Again, designate one person to call each member's name, with the member providing a 'Yea,' 'Nay,' or 'Abstain' response.

## For the Secretary, or Whoever is Taking Notes:

- 5) **Consider Creating an Attendance and Voting Record Table or Spreadsheet Ahead of Time:** To make note-taking easier, consider creating a table or spreadsheet ahead of time for all of the roll calls. Include the names of the voting members, in the order that they will be called on to vote, for both the initial attendance roll call as well as each item you expect LAC members to vote on. Considering adding at least one more column for an extra vote, just in case! You may also want to have a column or other method to mark who motioned and seconded.

- 6) **Consider Pre-drafting Proposed Motion Language:** Crafting motion language for more complicated or in-depth votes is more difficult over the phone than in person, and may make note-taking more difficult. Consider drafting proposed motion language before the meeting as a starting point for discussion during the meeting, then making adjustments based on the discussion among members.

### **Be Considerate!**

- **Be Aware of Background Noise:** Televisions, barking dogs, and children are all easily heard when using the computer microphone or a speaker phone. Find a quiet place to join your meeting, and if there is still a lot of noise around you, use headphones with a microphone (such as the earbuds from your cell phone) to cut down on extra noise.
- **Mute Your Line:** To avoid excess background noise and potential audio feedback or echo, mute your line if you are not speaking. Computers and cell phones all have mute options. Older land line phones may not have it on the phone, but some call services have one (e.g. \*7 or similar, but check with your particular service).
- **Wait Your Turn to Speak:** If more than one person is talking, no one can hear anyone. Wait until the person speaking is done before jumping in, and if several people want to speak at once, the chair should recognize each person by name. In consideration for those waiting to speak, if you have the floor, keep your point concise and relevant to the discussion. Conference calls are not the time to ramble on.

### **Online Meeting Suggestions:**

- **Internet Speed:** If connecting through your personal computer, internet speed has an impact. Dropping off the service and short-term freezing may occur with slow or crowded internet service. If this occurs too often, you can stop the camera video and just stick with voice. If bandwidth is a real problem, online services also have a voice-only number you can call on your phone.
- **Screen Sharing:** All of the online services offer a screen sharing option for the host, so that you see the documents on their screen rather than the host's face. This is a great tool for reviewing permit applications, especially, and the host's mouse can be used to point out features or, with a drawing tool, to highlight important text in a document.
- **Chat Feature:** The chat feature works well for making a comment without interrupting the speaker, and helps the chair keep track of topics to follow up on when the current speaker is finished.
- **Raise Hand Tool:** Some online tools have a "raise hand" tool to request to speak. Consider using this feature if it is available.

### **Other Reminders:**

- **Signatures on Letters and Permit Applications:** An email from the LAC chair or other LAC representative, as necessary, can substitute for an LAC signature on letters and permit applications during the current emergency.
- **Meeting Minutes:** Include a notation at the beginning of your minutes that the meeting was convened under the emergency provisions of RSA 91-A. For example:  
*Chair NAME called the meeting, conducted via online meeting, to order at 7:00 PM under the emergency provisions of RSA 91-A, New Hampshire's Right-to-Know law, as allowed by Emergency Order 11 under Executive Order 2020-04 in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. Chair NAME conducted a roll call of LAC members, invited any guests to introduce themselves, and welcomed all present.*