

TOWN OF MONKTON

REMOTE MEETING POLICY

In response to the current state of emergency due to COVID-19 the State of Vermont passed H.681 which contain temporary changes to the Open Meeting Law with the following provisions:

Physical location requirement temporarily waived. During the Governor's declared state of emergency due to COVID-19, members of a public body may attend any public meeting using electronic means, without being physically present and without designating or staffing a physical meeting location.

Public participation and advance public notice required. When meeting electronically, a public body must use technology that permits attendance of the public. Whenever feasible, public access must be allowed by telephone. Information regarding how the public may access meetings electronically must be posted and must be included in each meeting agenda.

Recording of Selectboard and school board meetings required. Municipal legislative bodies and school boards must record their public meetings, unless unusual circumstances make it impossible to do so.

Minutes timeframe extended when short-staffed. In the event of a staffing shortage during this declared emergency, a public body may extend the time limit for the posting of minutes to not more than 10 days (rather than 5 days) from the date of the meeting.

Following these guidelines, and in order to make remote meeting function better, the Town of Monkton has drafted the following Remote Meeting Policy.

1. When meeting electronically, a public body must use technology that permits attendance of the public or other means. Whenever feasible the remote access should include both internet enabled devices, cell phones and land lines. In order for the public to have meaningful access the methods to access a remote meeting must be clearly spelled out on the agenda.
2. In order for a remote meeting to be effective, the documents being discussed should be available to participants prior to the meeting in hard copy or digital form. If the public has materials to be reviewed by the public body, it should be submitted in a timely manner. Documents can be added at the meeting at the Chair's discretion. All documents discussed in a remote meeting are public records and available on request by members of the public.
3. All votes which are not unanimous must be taken by rollcall.
4. Members of the public may provide comments in writing or email regarding any matter of Town business. These comments will be read as part of the public comment period or during discussion of a specific agenda item, at the discretion of the Chair.
5. General Public Hearings, such as review of Zoning Bylaws or Town Plan, may be suspended if they are unable to meet the guidelines listed above.
6. Development Review Board hearings can take place if the documents pertaining to the issue being warned are included in the certified mail sent to hearing participants (abutters). Non-

abutters (other members of the public) can pre-register for any hearing and receive relevant documents as well. Notice of preregistration instructions must be included in warning of the hearing.

7. The Selectboard must record meetings, unless unusual circumstances makes it impossible, and place the recording on the Monkton website.

Eliminating the physical meeting location requirement is an extreme measure, but it is appropriate at this time. While we recognize the need to limit unnecessary face-to-face contact and large gatherings, we must do so without fully sacrificing the public's right to know.