

# VLCT HYBRID PUBLIC MEETING CHECKLIST

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

## IN ADVANCE OF MEETING

- Provide advance public notice of meetings. See VLCT Model Hybrid 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, and
    - in or near Town Clerk's office and two other public places in town.
  - 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 Hybrid Meeting Notice and Agenda.
  - Include information on how the public can access the meeting electronically and provide a contact for troubleshooting technical difficulties.
  - Recommend advertising instructions in additional ways to foster accessibility.
  - Must designate at least one physical location where a member of the public can attend and participate in the meeting. (At least one member of the public body, or at least one staff or designee of the public body, must be physically present at each designated meeting location).
  - 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,
    - post electronically to a website, if one exists, that is maintained or has been designated as the official website, and
    - make available to a person prior to a meeting upon specific request.
- Ideally, pick a technology that allows people to attend electronically such as Zoom, Skype, or conference call system.
- Set up hybrid meeting to enable everyone to hear and be heard throughout.

- This may require shared or individual microphones and speakers at the designated physical location to ensure the public can be heard and hear the meeting throughout.
- Determine process for managing in-person and remote access simultaneously.

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## 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 chat feature is enabled.
- Advise participants that meeting is being recorded (if applicable).
- Confirm that members can hear each other and the public.
- Consider reading the VLCT Script for Opening a Hybrid 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 must 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 hybrid meeting when public body adjourns.

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## 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.

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## 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.

## **Suggested language at commencement of your hybrid meeting**

The meeting of the [insert public body's name] will come to order. This meeting is a hybrid meeting, which means that some or all of the public body is meeting remotely and some are meeting physically in a previously noticed location where the public may attend to observe, listen, and participate contemporaneously.

One member of this public body or other staff is present at the location to ensure the public can participate, if desired. Please note that while we will strive to provide means for those attending remotely to participate in the public comment period, there may be technical difficulties or reasons that otherwise prevent or interrupt remote public participation.

- If a member of the public or of the public body has technical difficulties accessing this meeting remotely, please alert us by [insert instructions for how public can report a problem, e.g., call X number, use remote software's chat function, email selectboard assistant, etc.] problem]; and
- In the event of a technical difficulty that cannot be resolved, we may continue the meeting if necessary, to time and place certain.
- Please note that all votes taken during this meeting that are not unanimous will be done by roll call vote, in accordance with the law.
- As required by the Open Meeting Law, let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance of all members participating in the meeting and have those members attending remotely identify themselves to ensure that they can hear and be heard throughout the meeting.
- [insert instructions on how to use the "raise hand" feature on the virtual platform and to discourage the use of chat for other than reporting a technical difficulty.]