

Tips for Running Effective Virtual Meetings

In light of Governor Little's proclamation authorizing county commissioners to hold public meetings via teleconferencing or web conferencing, IAC has developed tips for counties to assist in conducting virtual public meetings. Please consult with your county's IT professionals in identifying a solution that meets your county's needs as well as your county's prosecuting attorney to ensure compliance with the Governor's proclamation and the Idaho Open Meeting Law.

Web and Teleconferencing Solutions

Where possible, use a web conferencing platform to live stream your county commissioner meetings. Popular programs include [Zoom](#), [WebEx](#), [GoToMeeting](#), and [Adobe Connect](#). Those of you that use Google's G-Suite or Microsoft 365 may already have access to services like [Google Hangouts Meet](#) or [Microsoft Teams](#) and may not need to purchase additional software. Many of these services offer a free trial period for you to test the software program before subscribing.

These web conferencing solutions offer the ability to include a video feed of the meeting, a call in number for those that do not have access to the internet, the ability to publicly present information (documents, spreadsheets, presentations, etc.), and a "raise your hand" feature allowing participants to request an opportunity to speak. A comprehensive software package offers the most features to provide general access to the public in a virtual setting. These services also allow governing board members to fully participate in the meeting from a remote setting. In order to use these web conferencing software solutions, you will need a webcam and a microphone. Most laptops, tablets, and smartphones have a built in webcam and microphone.

Where web conferencing solutions are not available, make a conference call number available for the public to listen in to the meeting. Please make sure that the teleconferencing service you use has enough capacity to accommodate the public to participate. This is important because some teleconferencing packages limit the number of individuals that can call in to a meeting.

Public Notice

You should update your meeting notices to include a notice that public meetings will be conducted virtually using web conferencing and teleconferencing. The meeting notice should also include a link to the web conferencing website that the public will need to enter into their web browser to view the online meeting web stream as well as the conference call number and passcode for audio streaming. While web conferencing or live streaming is not required, teleconferencing is. If you use web

conferencing, it will be helpful to include basic instructions for participating in the public meeting via web conference.

Example of language to be included in meeting notices:

In accordance with the Governor's stay at home order and proclamation allowing public meetings to be conducted remotely, the meeting will be conducted entirely remotely and live streamed on the County website using [INSERT NAME OF WEB CONFERENCING SOFTWARE]:

- *The live meeting can be viewed here [INSERT LINK TO WEB CONFERENCE ROOM]*
 - *To participate via web conferencing: [INSERT LINK TO WEB CONFERENCE ROOM]*
 - *To participate or listen via telephone dial 1-XXX-XXX-XXXX, then enter passcode XXX XXX XXX*
- *Instructions for participation in the meeting can be found at [INSERT WEBSITE TO VIEW INSTRUCTIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING]*

General Tips

- Don't attempt to achieve total proficiency before using, try it and work out the bugs as you move along.
- Know that you'll get better each time you use it. Test the web conferencing software program or conference call number before your meetings and become familiar with differences between programs.
- Do tests to ensure all can hear and it can be recorded by your clerk.
- Allow for a little extra time to conduct the meeting, you may or may not need.
- Accept that mistakes may happen with first time use but you can't correct those mistakes if you don't formally use it.
- Take 30 minutes before the meeting starts to practice video, audio, muting and unmuting, screen sharing, presenter sharing, chatting and questions.
- Use video, if possible, to keep people's attention.
- Complete test runs with those presenting to make participants comfortable.
- Have an agenda and script that include when presenters will need control and when to unmute attendees for questions and comments.
- Start meetings 30 minutes early to test audio, web cam and screen sharing, and solve attendee problems.
- Complete test runs to make participants comfortable.
- Do test runs with 2-3 people to make it manageable before conducting in larger group.
- Remind participants to mute unless speaking to eliminate background noise.
- Verbally identify yourself before speaking.
- Take a roll call vote for all motions/actions.

Starting your meeting

1. Ask users to mute from their end, if possible.
2. Explain the agenda and chat/question options to attendees.
3. Ask speakers to announce themselves before speaking. (You can ask this of members of public who decide to speak at public comment portion, just as you would in a regular meeting.)