

	Policy Title: Electronic Meeting Participation and Etiquette Policy	Policy No: CO-020
	Authority: Council	Classification: n/a
	Date Adopted: March 28, 2022	Motion No:
Historical Changes:		

Purpose:

The Council Procedure Bylaw authorizes electronic meetings under certain circumstances and electronic participation in Council meetings for a limited number of council members and staff. The purpose of the Electronic Meeting Policy is to provide guidance for electronic meetings and electronic participation at Council meetings.

Scope:

This policy applies to all individuals participating in meetings by electronic means.

Definitions (from the Council Procedure Bylaw):

Electronic Meeting	Means a meeting where all Members of Council and participants are participating electronically under the circumstances described in section 10(1) of the Council Procedure Bylaw.
Electronic Participation	Means a meeting where some Members of Council and/or staff are participating electronically at an in-person meeting.

Electronic Participation Guidelines:

General

1. All electronic participants must join the meeting 10 minutes before the scheduled meeting time to confirm their equipment is functioning properly.
2. The chair must not participate electronically unless the circumstances require an Electronic Meeting.
3. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair will announce the names of the Council members participating electronically.
4. Electronic participants are to be present in the meeting in the same way they would be present at an in-person meeting; all efforts should be made to participate from a location free of distractions.
5. If a council member participating electronically must leave the meeting, they should raise their hand (either physically or by using the meeting software technology) and wait to be acknowledged by the chair.
6. If a council member becomes disconnected (e.g. poor internet connection), staff will inform the Mayor, who will then ask Council if they wish to make a motion to recess. If a member is disconnected, and it results in a loss of quorum, the meeting will recess until quorum can be restored. If quorum cannot be restored (e.g. power outage), the meeting will be adjourned and the remaining agenda items added to the next meeting whenever possible.
7. Electronic participants attending a closed meeting will be required to confirm that confidentiality is maintained, and that no other person is able to see, or see and hear, the meeting taking place.
8. The Corporate Officer, or designate, has the authority to cut video-feed, have existing video edited, and to mute or remove a participant, other than a council member, from an electronic meeting for comments or actions that are profane, slanderous, harassing in nature, or violates any valid

regulation or law including the *Copyright Act* and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Video

9. Council members participating electronically must keep their cameras on at all times except in instances where the bandwidth cannot support video streaming; it is only in this instance that a council member may participate through audio only.
10. Except as permitted in section 9, if a Council member is no longer visible or turns their video off at any time during the meeting, they will be considered absent from the meeting.
11. Council and staff backgrounds should display the standard District of Sooke videoconference background to avoid distraction of others, as well as to protect the privacy of other individuals.
12. If the Council member must leave the meeting temporarily, after being acknowledged and excused by the chair, they should turn off their video and resume the video feed as soon as they return to the meeting.
13. In the event of an Electronic Meeting where members of the public may participate electronically, they may only turn their cameras on to address council when directed to do so by staff or the chair.

Audio/Speaking

14. Microphones of all participants will be kept muted except when speaking and should only be unmuted when the chair has recognized the speaker, to call a point of order, to declare a conflict of interest, or when otherwise permitted to speak under the Council Procedure Bylaw.
15. Subject to section 18, the chair will determine the speaking order and only one person may speak at a time.
16. To alert the chair of a desire to speak, participants will either raise their hand by using the meeting software technology or by physically raising their hand. In either case, the hand should remain raised until recognized by the chair.
17. The Corporate Officer, or designate, may mute any attendee that appears to have forgotten to mute their microphone.
18. In the case of an electronic meeting, members of the public are required to register in advance with Corporate Services. At the appropriate time in the meeting, the chair will ask the Corporate Officer, or designate, to call on the public to speak in the order they were registered.

Voting

19. Council members will physically raise their hands clearly when appearing by video to show their vote when called for by the chair. Hands should not be lowered until acknowledged by the chair.
20. If a council member is participating by audio only, the chair will call on the council member to verbally register their vote.
21. The chair shall announce the results of the vote at that time so that all members are clear on the result. If there is concern that the votes were not correctly announced by the chair, it should be raised immediately.

Conflict of Interest

22. When a council member has declared a conflict of interest, they must state in general terms their conflict. At that point, the chair will direct staff to remove the council member from audibly and visually participating in the electronic meeting. This will be done by moving the council member(s) to a waiting room using the meeting software technology. Once the item has concluded, staff will re-admit the council member to the meeting.

Chat Function

23. The chat function within the meeting software technology is only to be used to alert the Corporate Officer, or designate, to issues and is not to be used for commentary. If the chat function is used

inappropriately, the participant will be notified and continued inappropriate use of the chat function may result in removal from the meeting.

References:

Policy Number:	CO-020
Policy Owner:	Council
Endorsed by:	Leadership
Final Approval:	Council
Date Approved:	March 28, 2022
Review Date:	
Revision Date:	
Related Policies:	Council Procedure Bylaw
Related Publications:	

Contact Information:

Position: Director of Corporate Services