

Town of Paris
Remote and Hybrid Meeting Policy
Pursuant to 1 M.R.S § 403-B

SECTION I: PURPOSE

The Town of Paris strives to provide an open and transparent government that maximizes the ability of its residents to participate in the public process. This Policy sets forth the conditions upon which the Town of Paris (any/all Boards or Committees) may conduct a remote meeting, as that term is defined in this Policy. In addition, this Policy sets forth the conditions upon which the Town of Paris (any/all Boards or Committees) may conduct a hybrid meeting, as that term is defined in this Policy.

SECTION II: DEFINITIONS

A. Hybrid Meeting

A public proceeding, as defined in 1 M.R.S. § 402(2), as may be amended, conducted with some meeting attendees in person/face-to-face at a designated physical location while connecting with other meeting attendees by remote means.

B. Public Meeting

A “public proceeding”, as that term is defined in 1 M.R.S. § 402(2), as may be amended.

C. Remote Means

Means “remote methods” as that term is defined in 1 M.R.S. § 403-B(1), as may be amended. For purpose of this Policy, “remote means” may include, but is not necessarily limited to: Zoom, Go-To-Meeting, Skype, Google Meet, or other comparable internet-based telephonic or videoconferencing platform. Remote means does not include text-only means such as e-mail, text message, or chat functions.

D. Remote Meeting

A public proceeding, as defined in 1 M.R.S. § 402(2), as may be amended, conducted solely by remote means.

SECTIONS III: REMOTE MEETINGS

The Town of Paris shall conduct its meetings in person unless the Chair (or in his/her absence, the Vice Chair of all Boards or Committees), in consultation with the Town Manager, makes a determination that an emergency or urgent issue exists that requires the Board or Committee to conduct a remote meeting, including, but not limited to, inclement weather and/or disasters or catastrophes caused by either natural or man-made causes. The determination of such an emergency or urgent issue shall be made as soon as practicable, and notice of a meeting being conducted solely by remote means shall be disseminated consistent with 1 M.R.S. § 406, as may be amended, and this Policy.

SECTION IV: HYBRID MEETINGS WITH REMOTE PARTICIPATION BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD OR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Except for a remote meeting being conducted consistent with Section III of this Policy, members of any Board or Committee are expected to be physically present for all public meetings except when being physically present is not practicable for one or more members. Circumstances under which physical presence for one or more members is not practicable are limited to:

- A. Illness or other physical condition, or temporary absence from the Town of Paris, that causes the member to face significant difficulties travelling to and attending the public meeting in person; or
- B. To provide a reasonable accommodation to a member with a disability. A Town Board or Committee member who believes it is not practicable, as set forth above, for him/her to attend a meeting in person shall notify the Chair (or in his/her absence, the Vice Chair), as well as the Town Manager, of the existence of such circumstances by 10am of the day of the meeting. The Chair (or in his/her absence, the Vice Chair), shall, in consultation with the Board or Committee member, then make a determination whether being physically present is not practicable for that Board or Committee member and, if such a determination of impracticability is made, so notify the Town Manager that a hybrid meeting will be conducted. If the agenda has already been posted at the time the determination is made to authorize a hybrid meeting with the Board or Committee member remote participation, an amended meeting agenda containing the information set forth in Section VI (a) of this Policy shall be posted on the Town’s website and be distributed to all Town Board or Committee members, relevant Town staff, and local representatives of the media by the same or faster means used to notify Town Board or Committee members at least four (4) hours prior to the originally noticed meeting start time.

SECTION V: HYBRID MEETING WITH NO REMOTE PARTICIPATION BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD OR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Town of Paris is not required by law to offer this type of meeting format and will only conduct a hybrid meeting with no remote participation by individual Board or Committee members when it is determined by the Town Manager, in consultation with the Chair (or in his/her absence, the Vice Chair), that such a hybrid meeting is necessary for some special reason, such as the need for the Board or Committee members to communicate with Town staff, an outside attorney, professional or consultant without incurring the costs associated with that person’s travel to/from Paris.

SECTION VI: PUBLIC NOTICE OF REMOTE MEETINGS OR HYBRID MEETINGS

When a Board or Committee conducts a remote meeting or a hybrid meeting, the following shall occur:

- A. Notice of the public meeting shall be provided in a manner that provides ample time to allow public attendance. Such notice shall be disseminated in a manner that is reasonably calculated to notify the general public of the time, date, location, and method to be used to conduct the meeting. Such notice shall provide information

regarding how members of the public may attend the public meeting remotely and shall provide the physical location where members of the public may participate in person, if applicable.

- B. Members of the public shall be provided with a reasonable opportunity to participate in the public meeting by remote means, which shall at a minimum include an effective means of communication between such members of the public and the Board or Committee. Reasonable accommodations may be provided when necessary to provide access to individuals with disabilities.
- C. Unless the entire Board or Committee is conducting a remote meeting as provided in Section III of this Policy, members of the public must be provided the option to attend the meeting in person or by remote means.
- D. Unless the entire Board or Committee is conducting a remote meeting as provided in Section III of this Policy, the Chair (or in his/her absence, the Vice Chair), at the start of the meeting, shall announce the name of any/all Board or Committee member(s) participating by remote means and state the reason therefor, which reason must be consistent with Section IV.
- E. All public documents and other materials considered by the Boards or Committees shall be made available to members of the public by the same or more efficient means as they are provided to individual Boards or Committees. This requirement may be met by:
 - (i) posting all public documents and materials to be considered by the Boards or Committees on the Town's website at least one (1) business day prior to the meeting;
 - (ii) making physical copies of all documents and materials to be considered by the Boards or Committees available for in person pick-up at the Town Office at least one (1) business day prior to the meeting; or
 - (iii) enabling the "screensharing" function of the remote means utilized for the meeting in such a way that members of the public are able to view all relevant documents and materials while the Boards or Committees is reviewing and discussing the same.

SECTION VII: QUORUM

A Board or Committee member who participates in a remote meeting or a hybrid meeting is considered present for purposes of determining the presence of a quorum and voting.

SECTION VIII: ROLL CALL VOTE REQUIRED

All votes taken during a remote meeting or a hybrid meeting must be taken by roll call vote that can be seen and heard if using video technology, and heard if using only audio technology, by all Board and Committee members and the public.

SECTION IX: ZOOM PREFERRED

The preferred remote means for all Town Boards and Committees shall be Zoom Webinar. The platform shall be set up and hosted by a Town official and a digital recording shall be preserved. The use of private accounts to host a remote meeting or a hybrid meeting is prohibited.

SECTION X: DISRUPTIONS AND ADJOURNMENT

If during the conduct of a remote meeting or a hybrid meeting, the meeting is interrupted through disruptions or glitches in the technology, the meeting shall be automatically recessed for up to 15 minutes to restore communication when audio-visual communication cannot be maintained with a quorum of Town Board and Committee members. If the interruption cannot be resolved within 15 minutes, and the Town Board and Committee members has not provided reasonable notice to the public as to how the meeting will be continued at an alternative date and time, then the meeting shall be automatically adjourned. If the meeting being conducted is a hybrid meeting with no remote participation by individual Board or Committee members and a remote connection to the public location identified in the Town of Paris notice pursuant to Section VI(a) of this Policy is interrupted or lost, the meeting shall continue at the public location without the need for a recess or adjournment.

SECTION XI: EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

To preserve the executive session privilege of any portion of a meeting closed to the public, the Chair should confirm with each attendee that no unauthorized person is present or has access to any executive session being conducted via remote means. There shall be no audio or visual recording of an executive session.

SECTION XII: APPLICABILITY

This Policy does not apply to Town Meetings.

SECTION XIII: AMENDMENT; SEVERABILITY; EFFECTIVE DATE

This Policy may be amended as needed by a majority vote of the Town of Paris Select Board. The provisions of this Policy are severable, and if any provision shall be declared to be invalid or void, the remaining provisions shall not be affected and shall remain in full force and effect. This Policy shall take effect immediately upon adoption by the Town of Paris.