

Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

Virtual Meetings Policy



1. Title

This Policy may be cited as the "Virtual Meetings Policy" of the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's.

2. Authority

The Municipality takes its authority for this policy under the provisions set out in section 19A of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) which states, "*where a procedural policy of council so provides, a council meeting or council committee meeting may be conducted by electronic means*" following the provisions outlined in section 19A of the MGA.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to supply guidelines for holding virtual for all council and committee meetings. The procedural requirements in this Policy are intended to complement and supplement and not to replace the requirements contained in:

- a) The Municipal Government Act; and
- b) the Municipal Council Procedural Policy.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all council members, committee members, and staff of the Municipality and any group or individual presenting at a council or committee meeting.

5. Definitions

- 5.1. *Council* – the Council of the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's.
- 5.2. *Meeting* – a regular or special meeting of council or a council committee meeting.
- 5.3. *Emergency Meeting* – a meeting called where the Warden has determined that there is an emergency.
- 5.4. *In-Camera Meeting* – a meeting that is closed to the public for purposes outlined in section 22.2 of the MGA.
- 5.5. *Virtual Meeting* – a meeting that occurs virtually which can be a web-based meeting or conference format that allows people to see and hear each other. Participants talk in real time and may make presentations with visual aids such as charts and graphs.
- 5.6. *Public Health* – means the Nova Scotia Department of Public Health.

5.7. *Presenter* – members of the public, businesses, or non-profit organizations who have been approved by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to make a presentation to council or a committee.

5.8. *Individual* – means a councillor, staff member or presenter.

6. Policy

6.1. While it is preferred that municipal council and committee meetings be carried out in-person it is recognized that there may be some circumstances where meetings or individual participation may need to occur using virtual means including:

- a) Where Public Health orders or other circumstances do not allow for in-person meetings; or,
- b) Where a councillor, staff or presenter is not able to attend a meeting in-person due to:
 - i. Health considerations or illness; or,
 - ii. Travel considerations.

6.2. An individual participating in a council or committee meeting by virtual attendance is deemed to be present at the meeting.

7. Procedures

7.1. An individual who wishes to participate in a meeting through virtual attendance shall notify the CAO or Municipal Clerk no less than two days before the meeting in question except where the Warden determines the need for an emergency meeting.

7.2. Where a council or committee meeting is held entirely virtually:

- a) At least two days notice must be given to the public respecting the way the meeting is to be conducted.
- b) Notice to the public must be given by a publication in a newspaper circulating in the Municipality, posted on the Municipality's website, and in at least five conspicuous places in the Municipality.
- c) The virtual means must enable the public to see and hear the meeting as it is occurring.
- d) The virtual means must enable all the meeting participants to see and hear each other.

7.3. Where a council or committee meeting is held at a physical location with virtual attendees:

- a) The virtual means must enable the public to see and hear the members of the meeting as it's occurring.

b) The virtual means must enable all the meeting participants to see and hear each other.

7.4. Where individual virtual attendance is being used during a municipal council or committee meeting:

- a) Except for cause due to illness or emergency, no councillor shall attend more than two meetings via virtual means within a one fiscal year.
- b) A councillor who is participating in a meeting by virtual means must place all their votes verbally.
- c) Individuals participating by virtual means shall notify the Chair of their departure (either temporary or permanent) from the meeting, before exiting the meeting.

7.5. Where there are technological problems when trying to attend a meeting by virtual means:

- a) If technological problems prevent participation, the individual shall be marked as absent.
- b) If an individual's connection is lost during the meeting and cannot be reconnected, the minutes shall reflect when the individual left the meeting.

8. Related Policies, Procedures and Legislation

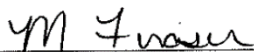
- Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act
- Council Procedural Policy
- Presentations to Council Policy

9. Revisions

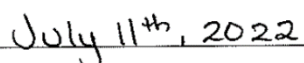
9.1. The Municipality shall ensure that this policy is reviewed at least once every four years following the inaugural meeting of Council or as considered necessary and, where necessary, revised.

10. Repeal

Videoconferencing & Teleconferencing Policy



Municipal Clerk



Date of Approval



SCHEDULE A

"Policy Record"

This policy will be reviewed at least once every four years. The "Policy Review Record" will be updated accordingly to reflect policy review and amendment dates.

Date of Review	Section(s) Updated	Council Approval Date
	Adoption of Policy	July 11, 2022