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TOWN OF WHATELY MASSACHUSETTS

SELECTBOARD

June 2, 2021

Third Guidance on Holding Meetings for Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Commissions

This guidance document supersedes the Second Guidance on Holding Meetings for Town Departments, Boards, Committee and Commissions adopted on November 18, 2020.

COVID19 continues to be a public health threat globally, but the threat to our community appears to be subsiding due to the widespread availability of vaccines and therapeutics. Much has been learned about the virus and how it is transmitted over the past sixteen months and safety standards have been developed to allow the safe resumption of municipal services and activities. If the public health metrics, currently trending in a positive direction, reverse course the Selectboard will take further action to protect town employees, volunteers and residents by once again closing town buildings to in-person meetings.

There is some uncertainty about the future of remote meetings because Governor Baker's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law dated March 13, 2020 is set to expire when the statewide State of Emergency is lifted on June 15, 2021. Unless legislation is adopted prior to June 15, 2021 the ability of boards and committees to meet remotely without a quorum of persons physically present goes away. This means that any board, committee or commission meeting will be required to be in-person with at least a quorum of members present. Governor Baker recently filed legislation to temporarily extend the Open Meeting Law exception until September 1, 2021 so that a permanent solution can be worked out, but the legislation has not yet passed.

Therefore, the Whately Selectboard hereby rescinds its *Second Guidance on Holding Meetings for Town Departments, Boards, Committees and Commissions originally adopted on November 18, 2020* and instructs the following:

1. Any town board, committee or commission that elects to do so may resume hybrid in-person/remote meetings as of Monday, June 7, 2021 so long as the following conditions are met.
 - a. All in-person meeting participants and attendees adhere to the face covering requirement for Town Buildings; and
 - b. All in-person meetings shall continue to be scheduled through Zoom to allow board, committee and commission members and members of the public to participate remotely; and
 - c. All in-person meetings shall be recorded via Zoom and a link to the recording shall be sent to adminassist@whately.org for public record retention services.

The Town is currently waiting for a cost estimate to add audio/visual equipment to the large conference room to make it easier to hold hybrid in-person/remote meetings, but until that time we recommend the following procedures, which will provide remote attendees with audio access (speaking and listening) to the meeting (plus screen share when used).

Suggestions for Holding a Hybrid Meeting

1. Zoom meeting host should be physically present in the meeting room with a laptop
2. The Zoom meeting host logs into Zoom and begins the Zoom meeting and begins the recording
3. The Zoom meeting host turns off the speakers and microphone on the laptop (or does not turn on "computer audio"). If anyone else has a laptop logged into Zoom in the meeting room their speakers and microphones should be turned off as well to avoid feedback. Video does not need to be on.
4. The Zoom meeting host sets up the conference room phone in the middle of the board, committee or commission members and dials into the Zoom meeting and enters the meeting ID#. The conference room phone will allow board, committee and commission members to be heard and also to hear members of the public speaking.
5. The Zoom meeting host will continue to host the meeting and will have the ability to monitor and control the meeting and to share their screen to show documents, etc...
6. Once the meeting has concluded the Zoom meeting host will end the meeting and the recording will be sent to administration.

2. Any town board, committee or commissioner that elects to do so may continue to meet fully remote so long as the Open Meeting Law continues to allow for such fully remote meetings. Any such fully remote meeting shall be held via Zoom. All fully remote meetings shall be recorded and a link to the recording shall be sent to adminassist@whately.org for public record retention purposes.
3. All meeting agendas shall include a Zoom link when publicly posted so the town board, committee and commission members, along with the public, can access the meeting remotely if

desired. The Zoom link and login information can be requested from the Town Administrator (townadmin@whately.org) or Administrative Assistant (adminassist@whately.org).

4. For every remote or hybrid meeting, the meeting host shall assign a co-host to help address any technical difficulties that may arise during the meeting. All votes during the remote or hybrid meeting shall be done by roll call vote and recorded as such. Please remember that all other applicable laws remain in effect, minutes will need to be kept and all other rules relating to meeting decorum and executive session still apply.

If you need technical help with the Zoom service please contact the Town Administrator (townadmin@whately.org). Thanks for your patience as we continue to adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic in the most efficient and safest manner possible. This guidance document will be updated as necessary.