

Information for Town Council Meeting on September 12, 2023

TO: Mayor and Town Council

VIA: Kirk W. Blouin, Town Manager

FROM: Carolyn Stone, Deputy Town Manager for Business Enterprise & Culture

RE: Discussion of Public Participation at Future Public Meetings

DATE: September 5, 2023

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Town Council continue discussing public meeting virtual access and provide staff with direction.

SUMMARY EXPLANATION/BACKGROUND

Town Council had a robust discussion on August 8, 2023, on whether virtual public participation should be allowed at additional (i.e., ARCOM/LPC) and future meetings. The current policy is that Town Council, Town Council Development Review and Planning, Zoning, and Building meetings (while the Code review process is ongoing) will have virtual/online public participation. The Council did not decide whether other board and commission meetings should have virtual public participation and asked the item to be placed on the September agenda.

The Council discussed certain factors as they debated the merits of virtual participation for other public meetings. Topics/points included:

- Which types of meetings or topics would qualify? i.e., large commercial projects that have garnered broad public interest; A broad definition of ‘public interest’ is needed but could be measured by the amount of correspondence/communication received on that particular project.
- Should ARCOM and LPC both have virtual participation in the off-season since so many residents and stakeholders are out of Town or should it be year-round?
- Consideration of the ‘all of nothing’ approach on whether to host meetings virtually since someone has to make the decision and what type of precedent that sets for the Town.
- Cost/benefit analysis with hosting virtual meetings (staff time) vs. number of users.
- Making it easier for the public to access the virtual meeting links and use the technology.

FISCAL IMPACT

If the Town Council decides to move additional meetings to virtual, there will be a fiscal impact on the Town budget.

TOWN ATTORNEY REVIEW

The Town Attorney will need to opine on whether offering virtual public participation at only certain meetings will have any potential negative impact to the Town.

CC:

Bob Miracle, Deputy Town Manager for Finance & Administration

Jess Savidge, Administrative Manager

Kelly Churney, Acting Town Clerk

Andy Jadoo, Director of Information Technology

Pat Gayle-Gordon, Deputy Town Clerk

Skip Randolph, Town Attorney

Attachment: Town Council Meeting Virtual Data Spreadsheet as of 9.4.23