VIRTUAL MEETING TIPS FOR MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

Despite the need to shift our practices to support physical distancing recommendations from Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, the business of good governance must proceed so your Council can continue to serve its residents, businesses and community organizations.

Below are a few tips we've complied based on the real-life experience of participating in a variety of virtual meetings, including Councils, Boards and Committees.

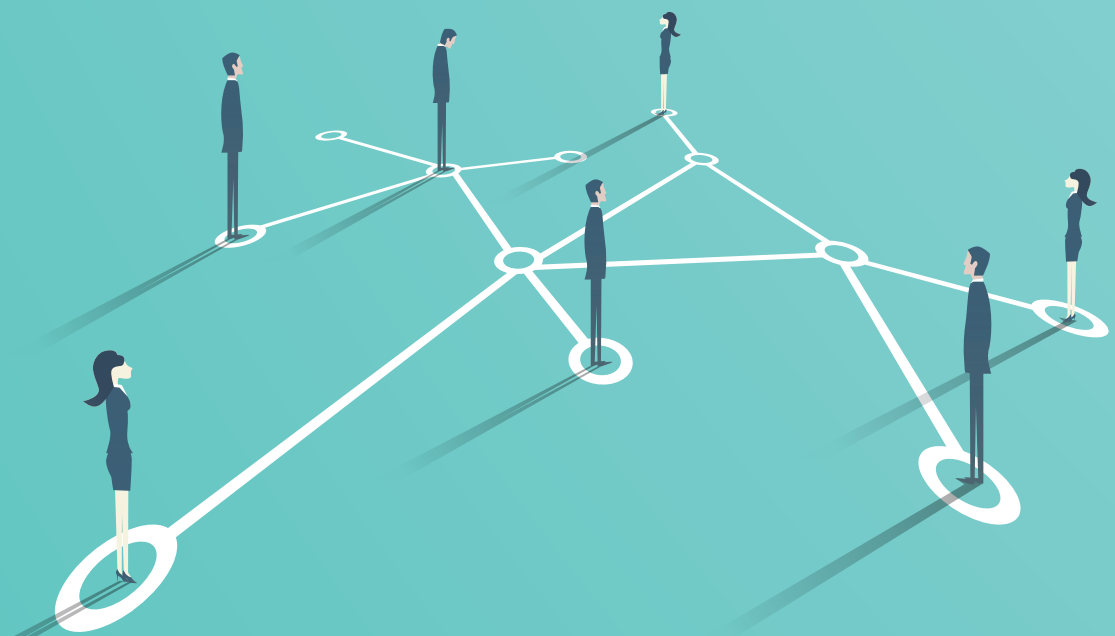
Meeting Process

RULES OF ORDER

- Strict adherence to your rules of order will be necessary to maintain control over the meeting and ensure the efficient transaction of Council business.
- Align how often each member of Council speaks to a topic to your Procedure Bylaw.
- Establish a process to keep track of debate, movers, seconders and orders of motions.
- Direction to Administration needs a Resolution before action takes place.
- Votes can be roll call if a teleconference is used or a show of hands if using a video conference platform. This practice may require a change to your Procedure Bylaw if most votes are not identified as recorded votes.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- Agenda creation and distribution timelines are the same as identified in the Municipal Government Act (MGA) and your Procedure Bylaw.
- Official notification periods for Public Hearings remains the same. Public hearings are anticipated to continue through the Council meeting process.
- In camera participation should be securely managed. It is important to confirm via roll call and/or through web-based platform features who is 'in the room'. This should be done with the support of your IT resource and/or Clerk. To accommodate this your Code of Conduct Bylaw may need to be updated.



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Technology

- Always use the approved technology recommended by your IT support and follow their advice on preparing your equipment for secure access to the meeting.
- Conduct a test meeting in advance.
  - Try out all the features of the teleconference or web-based platform.
  - Practice adding and removing participants.
  - Do the same practice session with and/or for Administration.
  - Create a technology focused Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) or tip sheet for members of Council and Administration.
  - If conducting a video conference, determine in advance if having everyone's video activated will impact the connection speed.
- Support those who are new to the chosen technology and its features with additional test meetings and training.
- Manage the mute function so that only those who are identified to speak at a specific point have an open microphone. This should be managed by the Clerk or your IT support.
- The Mayor or Reeve should be focused on running the meeting and supporting good process so they should not be expected to operate any of the meeting technology.

Involving the Public

Help Delegations and members of the public know what to expect.

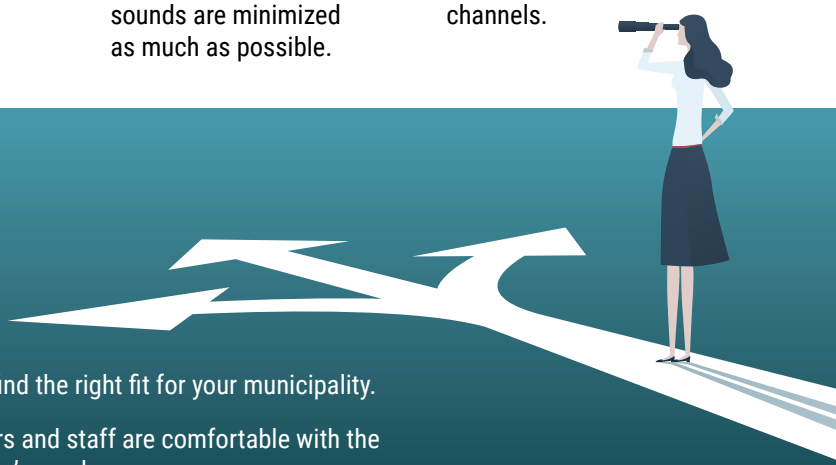
- Create a 'helpful hints' and/or FAQ sheet that explains how the meeting will be run virtually, their roles and responsibilities, when and how they would address Council and, participant etiquette when addressing Council (e.g., eliminate background noises such as TVs or radios).
- Post the 'helpful hints' to your website and through social media feeds, share with Delegations in advance and, as part of notifications about the meeting let people know where they can find this information.

Other

- Prepare a list of likely motions to support the Mayor or Reeve in navigating Resolutions.
- Dress the way you usually would for a meeting.
- Choose your location carefully so that distractions such as household, pet and/or outside sights and sounds are minimized as much as possible.

Know that meetings will take longer, maybe **30% longer** in the beginning, and this time will likely decrease as you and your team become more comfortable with the virtual format.

- Let people know about the change to virtual meetings through your approved communication channels.



Remember

- This is new for everyone. Try different things until you find the right fit for your municipality.
- Don't be in a rush, make sure you, your fellow councillors and staff are comfortable with the technology being used and that it suits your municipality's needs.

EMERGE SOLUTIONS INC
maria@emergesolutions.ca
(780) 718-7328

STRATEGIC STEPS INC
ian@strategicsteps.ca
(780) 416-9255

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