



Teleconference, Online, and Hybrid Meetings: Procedures and Suggestions for Local Advisory Committees

In an ideal world, local river management advisory committees (LACs), the Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC) and CJRC's local river subcommittees (LRSs) would always conduct their business in person. However, in-person meetings are not always possible due to weather, health, conflicting responsibilities and short timeframes under which to conduct statutory duties. Hybrid meetings, where some members attend the meeting in person and others attend online, as well as fully online/teleconference emergency meetings are allowed under [RSA 91-A:2](#), the Right-to-Know Law, under certain conditions.

All Meetings in which One or More Members are Attending Remotely:

RSA 91-A:2 IV contains the requirements for hybrid and emergency meetings that apply to LACs and LRSs. Key elements that apply to all electronic meetings are:

- Meeting notices must include the link to the online meeting, if used, as well as the voice-only link/teleconference number and access code for the meeting. The notice must also include a phone number for the public to call if they are having trouble connecting. *Members of the public must be able to connect to your meeting by phone.*
- All meeting participants, including members of the public, must be able to communicate with each other contemporaneously. If someone is unable to connect, postpone the meeting until that can be arranged.
- Anyone participating electronically must identify others with them.
- Attendance, including members and guests, and votes must be taken by roll call. Members participating electronically are considered present with respect to quorums and voting.

Hybrid Meetings – Additional Requirements:

- The LAC/LRS must vote to allow one or more members to participate remotely.
- Any member participating remotely must state why it is not reasonably practical to attend in person, and that reason must be stated in the minutes.
- At least 1/3 of the total membership must be present at the physical meeting location.

Emergency Meetings – Additional Requirements:

- Emergency meetings may be conducted in person, in a hybrid format, or completely via electronic means.
- The chair of the committee determines when an emergency meeting is required. The minutes must clearly spell out the need for the emergency meeting.

Be Considerate (AKA Reminders for Meeting Participants):

- **Be Aware of Background Noise:** Televisions, barking dogs, and children are all easily heard when using the computer microphone or a speaker phone. Find a quiet place to join your meeting, and if there is still a lot of noise around you, use headphones with a microphone to cut down on extra noise.
- **Mute Your Line:** To avoid excess background noise and potential audio feedback or echo, mute your line if you are not speaking. Computers and cell phones all have mute options. Older land line phones may not have a mute button, but some services have a dialed mute option (e.g. *7). Check with your service to find out.

- **Wait Your Turn to Speak:** It is difficult to hear when multiple people are talking during online meetings. Wait until the person speaking is done before jumping in. If several people want to speak at once, the chair should recognize each person by name. In consideration for those waiting to speak, if you have the floor, keep your point concise and relevant to the discussion. For attendance and voting, designate one person to do the roll call with each member and guest, as appropriate, responding verbally.

For the Secretary, or Whoever is Taking Notes:

- **Meeting Minutes:** Include a notation at the beginning of your minutes if the meeting was convened under the emergency provisions of RSA 91-A. For example:
This emergency meeting was held virtually under the provisions RSA 91-A:2 IV(d) in order to conduct necessary business under a short deadline, as declared by the LAC chair.
 If you are holding a hybrid meeting, note which members and guests chose to attend the meeting online. For members, note why they were not able to attend the meeting at the physical location.
- **Consider Creating an Attendance and Voting Record Table or Spreadsheet Ahead of Time:** To make note-taking easier, consider creating a table or spreadsheet ahead of time for all the roll calls. Include the names of the voting members, in the order that they will be called on to vote, for both the initial attendance roll call as well as each item on which you expect LAC members to vote. Consider adding extra lines for guests attending and at least one more column for an unanticipated vote, just in case! You may also want to have a column or other method to mark who motioned and seconded.
- **Consider Pre-drafting Proposed Motion Language:** Crafting motion language for more complicated or in-depth votes is more difficult over the phone than in person and may make note-taking more difficult. Consider drafting proposed motion language before the meeting as a starting point for discussion during the meeting, then adjusting based on the discussion among members.

Online Meeting Suggestions:

- **Internet Speed:** If connecting through your personal computer, internet speed has an impact. Dropping off the service and short-term freezing may occur with slow or crowded internet service. If this occurs too often, you can stop the camera video and just stick with voice. If bandwidth is a real problem, online services also have a voice-only number you can call on your phone.
- **Screen Sharing:** Online services offer a screen sharing option for the host. This is a great tool for reviewing permit applications. The host's mouse can be used to point out features or, with a drawing tool, to highlight important text in a document.
- **Chat Feature:** The chat feature works well for making a comment without interrupting the speaker, and helps the chair keep track of topics to follow up on when the current speaker is finished.
- **Raise Hand Tool:** Some online tools have a "raise hand" tool to request to speak. Consider using this feature if it is available.

Teleconference and Online Meeting Services:

Some online meeting services have free options with limited features. However, in order to provide the obligatory dial-in feature, most services require paid subscriptions. Either way, all require the meeting host (which can be anyone on the LAC) to register and create an account. Some available online meeting applications offering all required meeting services are: [Microsoft Teams](#), [GoToMeeting](#), [WebEx](#), [Zoom](#), and [FreeConferenceCall](#).