

Sample Policy for Remote Meeting Procedure Using Internet Meeting Services

WHEREAS, the Town/ Village of _____ (adopted)(follows)¹ the current edition of *Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised* (hereafter “RONR”) as procedures for conducting meetings of the Town Board of Supervisors/Village Board of Trustees and all its committees and sub-units;

WHEREAS, RONR in Rule 9² states its rules provide only for in-person meetings unless a policy or bylaw authorizing electronic, or remote, meetings is adopted by an organization provides for electronic meetings;

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated meeting remotely to conduct Town/Village business, and other circumstances may necessitate that the Board meet remotely by electronic means;

WHEREAS, the Town/Village wishes to adopt rules to permit meetings by the Internet, provide procedures for effective, fair and open meetings;

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the Town/Village Board of _____ that the following Rules for Electronic Remote meetings are hereby adopted:

1. Remote meeting by electronic means authorized. The Board or any of its sub-units may meet remotely by electronic means when cause for doing so exists, such as, but not limited to, natural disasters, severe or harsh weather events, risks of infectious disease(s), war, riot or as a means to obtain a quorum. The presiding officer of the body may determine when a remote meeting shall be utilized, or a majority of the Board may so determine at a legally convened and noticed meeting of Board.
2. Definitions:
 - a. “Presiding Officer” includes the Chair/President, committee chair, commission chair or president, or any person authorized to preside over a meeting of the Town/Village governmental body.

¹ Local governments often have an ordinance, resolution or a basic motion adopting RONR as its procedure for conducting meeting. Others just as a matter of practice use or just follow RONR as a matter of general, often unspoken, consensus of the governing body. If your Town or Village has some formal adoption of RONR, use “adopted” in your policy. Otherwise, use “follows.” “Current edition” assumes your meetings rely on the current edition of RONR. Caution: some ordinances or policies refer to a specific edition of RONR, and in effect tie their meeting procedures to that edition, unless the body amends their decision adopting RONR. “Current edition” is recommended when adopting RONR to avoid a need for technical amendments to keep meeting procedures current.

² Local governments may adopt their own procedures modifying RONR, or not use RONR at all.

- b. "Member" is a supervisor/trustee or, or member of any sub-unit of the Board, including committees and commissions.
 - c. "Clerk" includes the Clerk, the Clerk's designee or any persons acting as a Clerk for a meeting.
 - d. "Board" is the Town/Village Board and any sub-units of the board or Town/Village Commission.
3. Login information. The Clerk shall send by e-mail to every member of the Board, and by Open Meetings Law notice [[Wis. Stat. § 19.84](#)] to the public at least 24 hours prior to the time of the meeting, the URL and codes necessary to connect to the Internet meeting service, and, as an alternative and backup to the audio connection included within the Internet service, the phone number and access code(s) the member needs to participate aurally by telephone. The Clerk may also include a copy of, or a link to, this policy.
4. Login time. The Clerk shall schedule Internet meeting service availability to begin at least 15 minutes before the start of each meeting.
5. Signing in and out. Members shall identify themselves as required to sign into the Internet meeting service and shall maintain Internet and audio access throughout the meeting whenever present but shall sign out upon any departure before adjournment.
6. Quorum calls. The presence of a quorum shall be established by audible roll call at the beginning of the meeting. Thereafter, the continued presence of a quorum shall be determined by the online list of participating members, unless any member demands a quorum count by audible roll call. Such a demand may be made pursuant to [Wis. Stat. §19.88\(2\)](#), following any vote for which the announced totals add to less than a quorum.
7. Technical requirements and malfunctions. Each member is responsible for his or her audio and Internet connections; no action shall be invalidated on the grounds that the loss of, or poor quality of, a member's individual connection prevented participation in the meeting.
8. Assignment of the floor. To seek recognition by the presiding officer, a member shall indicate by a hand "emoji" or by the method appropriate to the Internet meeting service being used. Upon assigning the floor to a member, the presiding officer may clear any online queue of members who had been seeking recognition. To claim preference in recognition, another member who had been seeking recognition may promptly seek recognition again, and the presiding officer shall recognize the member for the limited purpose of determining whether that member is entitled to preference in recognition.

9. Interrupting a member. A member who intends to make a motion or request that under the rules may interrupt a speaker shall use the “chat,” or similar feature, for the meeting service in use to so indicate, and shall thereafter wait a reasonable time for the presiding officer’s instructions before attempting to interrupt the speaker by voice.
10. Display of documents. The Clerk at the direction of the presiding officer shall designate an online area or enable a share screen for the display of documents relevant to a matter under consideration; and, to the extent feasible, the Clerk , or anyone assisting the clerk for this purpose, shall cause such documents that are currently before the meeting for action or information, to be displayed therein until disposed of or directed by the presiding officer to end the display.
11. Voting. Votes shall be taken by audible roll call or, when practicable within the meeting service platform, by electronic roll call. The presiding officer’s announcement of the voting result shall include the number of members voting on each side of the question and the number, if any, who explicitly respond to abstain or acknowledge their presence without casting a vote. Business may also be conducted by unanimous consent.
12. Video display. The presiding officer, the Clerk , or their assistants shall cause a video of all members in a collage format to be displayed throughout the meeting [*Possible addition*: or when the presiding officer determines it best appropriate, only the person recognized and speaking].
13. Meeting etiquette:
 - a. Members will be in responsible for muting/unmuting themselves.
 - b. Members must stay muted when NOT speaking.
 - c. No side conversations should be held in the “chat box,” only official business.
 - d. Identify yourself prior to speaking.
 - e. Any “Chat” function use is Public Record
14. Public attendance and participation.
 - a. Public Comment for remote meetings may be precluded or conducted by means as the Board may from time to time determine.
 - b. When possible, the meeting will be recorded and the recording promptly made publicly available on social media or a website.
 - c. This policy should not be used where Wisconsin Statutes or Law require a hearing unless the Board can determine a means for public access to documents, exhibits, maps and/or testimony or statements substantially similar to an in-person hearing, or as may otherwise be permitted by law.

This Policy shall be effective upon passage.

Passed on the _____ day of _____, 2020.

By the Town/Village Board of the Town/Village of _____

Town/Village Board Chairperson/president
Attested by

Town/Village Clerk

Prepared September 2020 by Philip Freeburg, Distinguished Lecturer, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Local Government Education. This sample policy is based on *Sample Rules for Electronic Meetings* by Henry M. Robert III, Daniel H. Honemann, Thomas J. Balch, Daniel E. Seabold, and Shmuel Gerber, in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition (2020).