

Protocols for Electronic Meetings and E-Voting

The current situation with COVID-19 is leading some sessions to create a protocol regarding electronic meetings and e-voting. Here is some advice from your Stated Clerk.

There is no such thing as an email meeting! Here's why:

- There is no way to determine or maintain a quorum.
- There is no way to provide opportunity for all voices to be heard in a way that allows for the debate and/or discussion.

Meetings using other electronic means such as conference calls or video conferencing (such as Zoom meetings) can be used as long as:

- There is a method to determine and maintain a quorum.
- There is an agreed upon protocol to ensure every member has opportunity to speak.
- There is an agreed upon protocol for calculating the votes.
- Every member of the council has access to whichever method is being used and knows how to use it.

Evotes should not be taken on any new business. If an evote is necessary the following needs to happen:

- The motion request is sent to the moderator.
- The moderator sends the email to the whole council with the following:
 1. The motion that is being voted on
 2. How a second will be determined (usually the first member to vote yes)
 3. A specific deadline for voting (normally 48-72 hours)
 4. A statement that the vote is sent solely to the moderator (**No reply all!**). This is because an evote is essentially a paper ballot.
 5. A statement reminding members that a vote should be "yes", "no", or "abstain". If a member has a question or wishes to comment (as is their right), then the vote is suspended until such time as a meeting of the council is held.
- The moderator shall notify the members of the council the decision and the clerk of session records the motion and vote in the minutes of the next meeting

Whatever method is used the following needs to be taken into account:

- Every member of the council has the right to be present.
- Every member of the council has the right to speak.
- Every member of the council has a right to vote.