

Ver.	Date	Description
1.0	2026-09-15	Initial version

Virtual Meeting Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the procedures and requirements for conducting meetings of Council and Council Committees by electronic means, and for participation by individual Council members through electronic means, in accordance with the Municipal Government Act of Nova Scotia.

This Policy is intended to:

- Ensure transparency, accountability, and public access to municipal decision-making;
- Facilitate participation by Council members when attendance in person is not practical;
- Establish consistent operational standards for virtual and hybrid meetings; and
- Ensure compliance with legislative requirements respecting notice, public access, quorum, voting, and records management.

2. Authority

This Policy is adopted pursuant to Section 19A of the Municipal Government Act, which authorizes municipalities to conduct Council and Committee meetings by electronic means where provided for in a procedural policy.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to:

- Regular meetings of the Town Council;
- Special meetings of Council;
- Meetings of Committees of Council;
- Meetings of other municipal entities;
- Public hearings required under municipal legislation; and
- Individual members participating electronically in otherwise in-person meetings.

This Policy does not apply to:

- Training sessions and workshops where no business is conducted; or
- Employee meetings.

4. Definitions

Electronic Means means any technology that allows participants to simultaneously hear and see one another and allows the public to hear and see the proceedings in real time.

Hybrid Meeting means a meeting where some participants are physically present and others participate by electronic means.

Virtual Meeting means a meeting conducted entirely through electronic means.

Member means a member of Council or a Council Committee.

Chair means the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Committee Chair, or person presiding over a meeting.

5. Authorization to Conduct Virtual Meetings 5.1 Council meetings and Committee meetings may be conducted wholly or partially by electronic means.

5.2 The Mayor, in consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer and Clerk, may determine whether a scheduled meeting will be conducted:

- In person;
- Virtually; or
- In a hybrid format.

5.3 Council may direct that a particular meeting be held virtually or in hybrid format by resolution.

6. Notice Requirements

6.1 When a meeting is to be conducted by electronic means, notice shall be provided to the public not less than two (2) days before the meeting.

6.2 The notice shall include:

- The date and time of the meeting;
- The location for in-person attendance for hybrid meetings;
- The method by which the meeting will be conducted; and
- Instructions for public access;

6.3 Public notice shall be provided through the posting on the Town's official website and five other locations within the Town of Antigonish as required in Section 19A 4(b);

These notice requirements are intended to satisfy the MGA section 19A requirement that the public receive advance notice respecting the manner in which the meeting will be conducted.

7. Public Access

7.1 Virtual meetings shall be conducted using technology that enables participants in the meeting and members of the public to hear and see the meeting as it occurs.

7.2 Where feasible, the Town shall livestream virtual meetings in accordance with the Town's Live Streaming Policy.

7.3 If technical difficulties interrupt public access, the Chair may:

- Temporarily recess the meeting until access is restored; and/or
- Adjourn the meeting to another date and time.

7.4 A failure of an individual member of the public to access the meeting due to their own technical limitations shall not invalidate proceedings.

8. Participation by Members

8.1 Council meetings are in person by default. Hybrid and virtual meetings are authorized to expand opportunity for elected officials, staff, and third-party participants to actively attend Council meetings on an exception basis.

8.2 The technology used must permit:

- The public to see and hear the participating member during the meeting; and
- All participants to see and hear one another simultaneously.

8.3 Members participating electronically are deemed present for purposes of quorum and voting.

8.4 Members participating electronically shall:

- Join from a location with adequate connectivity;
- Ensure they can be clearly seen and heard (maintain video and audio connectivity);
- Maintain confidentiality during any closed session; and
- Avoid distractions that interfere with meeting proceedings.

9. Quorum

9.1 Members attending electronically shall be counted toward quorum.

9.2 If the loss of connectivity reduces attendance below quorum, the meeting shall be recessed until quorum is restored or the meeting is adjourned.

10. Voting

10.1 All votes during virtual or hybrid meetings shall be conducted by recorded vote, unless otherwise permitted by law.

10.2 The Chair shall clearly state the motion under consideration before the vote is called.

10.3 Each member shall verbally indicate their vote when requested by the Chair.

10.4 The Clerk shall record the vote in the minutes.

11. Rules of Order

11.1 Council's governance rules and applicable legislation continue to apply to virtual and hybrid meetings.

11.2 For in person and hybrid meetings the Chair of the meeting must participate in person;

11.3 The Chair may establish reasonable protocols governing:

- Speaking order;
- Recognition of speakers;
- Management of technical disruptions.

11.4 Members shall keep their cameras and microphones activated, except when excused by the Chair. Disabling camera and microphone will be equivalent to leaving the Council table in an in-person meeting and the Member shall no longer be counted towards quorum, until they return to the hybrid or virtual meeting, by re-enabling their camera and microphone.

12. Public Participation

12.1 Where public participation is permitted by Council policy or applicable legislation, members of the public may participate electronically.

12.2 The Clerk may establish registration procedures and submission deadlines.

12.3 The Chair may remove participants who:

- Disrupt proceedings;

- Use offensive or abusive language;
- Fail to follow meeting procedures; or
- Present a cybersecurity risk.

13. In-Camera Meetings

13.1 In-camera sessions conducted electronically shall use secure technology and access controls.

13.2 Only individuals entitled to attend the in-camera session shall be permitted access.

13.3 Participants shall confirm that no unauthorized person can hear or view the proceedings.

14. Technical Failures

14.1 The Chair may recess a meeting to address technical difficulties.

14.2 If a member loses connection during debate or voting, the Clerk shall note the interruption in the minutes.

14.3 A meeting may continue where:

- Quorum remains present; and
- Public access remains available.

14.4 If public access is materially interrupted, the Chair shall determine whether

- Proceedings should be suspended until access is restored; and/or
- Proceedings are adjourned to a later date.

14.5 At the Chair's discretion, or by motion of Council, in person and hybrid meetings that maintain quorum during technological interruptions may continue without the electronic means.

15. Recording and Records Management

15.1 The Town may record and livestream virtual meetings, in accordance with the Town's Live Streaming Policy.

16. Privacy and Security

16.1 The Town shall utilize reasonable measures to protect personal information and meeting security.

16.2 Meeting platforms shall incorporate appropriate safeguards, including:

- Password protection;
- Waiting rooms or controlled admission;
- Participant authentication where required; and
- Administrative controls over screen sharing.

16.3 Members shall comply with all applicable privacy legislation and municipal policies.

17. Severability

If any provision of this Policy is found invalid by a court or tribunal, the remaining provisions shall remain in force.

18. Review

This Policy shall be reviewed at least once every term of Council or sooner if legislative amendments require revision.

CAO's Annotation for Official Policy

Date of Notice to Council Members Intent

To Consider (Minimum 7 Days): September 1, 2026

Date of Passage of Council Policy: September 15, 2026

I certify that this Policy was adopted by Council as indicated above.



Chief Administrative Officer

2026-09-29

Date