



701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: City Clerk

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: December 15, 2025

Re: Virtual Participation of Council Members in City Council Meetings

Impacted Ward: Citywide

Executive Summary

At the October 20, 2025 Pre-Council Meeting, the Council discussed the potential of allowing Council Members to participate in meetings virtually, and this report provides specific discussion points for the Council to consider in the development of a policy.

Discussion

Below are draft guidelines for Council consideration and discussion with regard to virtual participation in City Council meetings.

Virtual participation is available for all public (open) city council meetings, whether regular meetings, work sessions, pre-council meetings, etc. Virtual participation is the exception, not the rule. Virtual participation may only be utilized when there are extraordinary circumstances which prevent a member from attending the meeting in-person. Extraordinary circumstances are those events or factors that would preclude a member's physical attendance at the meeting, e.g., disability, illness or significant health concerns requiring precautionary actions, caregiving responsibilities, other significant or unexpected factors or events and events when a member is out of town for a short duration.

Technology has its advantages and its limitations. In the event of electrical, technological or equipment failures which interrupt or prohibit the member from being both seen and heard, the member seeking to participate virtually understands and acknowledges the member will be deemed absent from the meeting until the member can be both seen and heard again.

Advance notice is needed. Notification needs to be provided in writing to cityclerk@como.gov and eventservices@como.gov. All requests for virtual attendance shall be made at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance of the meeting. If unavoidable circumstances occur where a member is unable to provide twenty-four hours advance notice, a late request may still be made by a member; however, accommodation of the late request will be subject to the availability of adequate resources to accommodate the request.

Best practice is to have an in-person quorum, i.e., at least four council members participate at the meeting location, and for the presiding officer to be in the meeting location. It will be important for Council Members who will be missing a meeting entirely to communicate that with the Mayor, City Clerk, and City Manager as soon as possible when a conflict arises

preventing in-person attendance. If there are multiple requests for virtual participation which might prevent an in-person quorum, the lack of in-person quorum will be discussed with those requesting virtual participation to determine if an in-person quorum may be achieved.

Proposed language if the Council wants to require an in-person quorum: A quorum of the Council must be present, in person, in the meeting location. A member who is participating from a remote location may not be counted toward a quorum, but may participate and vote if there is a quorum of members at the physical location open to the public.

Proposed language if the Council does not want to require an in-person quorum: If an in-person quorum may not be achieved, a member who participates virtually shall be considered present for purposes of establishing a quorum as long as the member can be seen and heard.

The Mayor, or presiding officer, in the meeting location, is responsible for the following:

- Communicating expectations, protocols and decorum with the member participating virtually.
- Recognizing a member who is participating virtually to speak.
- Ensuring all chat box comments and emojis are disabled in the virtual meeting platform during the meeting.
- Ensuring a roll call vote is conducted for all items.

Each Council Member participating virtually is responsible for the following:

- Providing for their own personal electronic device and associated internet or telecommunications service necessary to attend the meeting using the virtual meeting platform.
- Having the camera on at all times during the meeting and remaining live (e.g. do not put up a picture of oneself). If the camera is turned off, or the council member walks away from the camera, the person will be considered as having left the meeting room.
- Having a high quality microphone to ensure quality audio interaction.
- Raising their hand when wanting to speak.
- Muting the microphone when not speaking, and unmuting it when speaking.
- Being in a private, secure space without distractions, i.e., no family, non-service animal, pet, etc.
- Ensuring there are no bright windows or lighting behind the Council Member which would obscure or shadow the face of the Council Member such that the face of the member cannot be captured in the video.
- Wearing appropriate clothing, e.g., something similar to what you would if you were at the in-person meeting.
- Arriving to the virtual platform meeting room at least fifteen minutes in advance in order to ensure everything is working correctly.

Proposed language if the Council wants to prohibit virtual participation in closed meetings:
Virtual participation in closed meetings is prohibited. Upon request, the city manager or mayor will brief any council member who is absent from a closed meeting as soon as practicable following the closed meeting.

Proposed language if the Council wants to allow virtual participation in closed meetings:
Virtual participation may be available for closed meetings if the Council Member has access to a secure location where other individuals are not present, the sound does not carry outside the room in which the Council Member is located, and the confidentiality of the information presented during the meeting may be maintained. The Council Member will need to affirm this when joining the meeting.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: Unknown, but likely minimal.
Long-Term Impact: Unknown, but likely minimal.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action

Suggested Council Action

Assuming the Council would like to proceed with allowing virtual participation for all public (open) city council meetings, provide feedback on all of the discussion points provided, which include the following:

- Will an in-person quorum be required?
- Is virtual participation the exception?
- What are the extraordinary circumstances?
- Any changes to the expectations of the mayor or presiding officer?
- Any changes to the expectations of the council member(s) participating virtually?



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Does the Council want to proceed with allowing virtual participation for closed city council meetings? If so, provide feedback as to any associated requirements.