

Introduced by _____

First Reading _____

Second Reading _____

Ordinance No. _____

Council Bill No. B -21

ORDINANCE

authorizing virtual meetings and virtual public participation for
public meetings during a declared state of emergency

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA, MISSOURI, AS
FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Definitions.

“Virtual meeting” is a meeting of a public governmental body in which a quorum of the governmental body is attending the meeting utilizing electronic equipment, including but not limited to, conference call, video conference, or video chat.

“Virtual public participation” is attendance at a meeting of a public governmental body by a member of the public using electronic equipment, including but not limited to, conference call, video conference, or video chat.

SECTION 2. Virtual meetings authorized during any declared state of emergency. During any declared state of emergency within the City, virtual meetings are hereby authorized to be held by the City Council or any board, commission, task force, committee, subcommittee or similar public governmental body constituted by the City. Any board or commission that has a right or obligation to conduct due process public hearings, legislative acts, engage in quasi-judicial decision-making or similar acts may be required to utilize enhanced video conference technology that will meet minimum requirements for due process under law. The following minimum procedures will be implemented for each virtual meeting:

- a. The chair of the governmental body and at least one city staff person shall be physically present in a meeting room accessible to the public.
- b. All members of the governmental body in attendance at the meeting either in person or by virtual participation shall be authorized to vote.
- c. A member of the governmental body who attends a meeting by virtual participation is solely responsible for providing their own personal electronic device and associated internet or telecommunications service necessary to attend the meeting or access the virtual meeting space. A member who has

technical difficulties and is unable to connect to the meeting space through virtual participation shall be deemed to be absent from the meeting.

- d. Any meeting that requires the utilization of video conference technology to obtain a quorum of the public governmental body or to meet minimum requirements for due process under law will require that the member's camera remain turned on throughout the meeting. A member that cannot be seen during a videoconference meeting will be considered to be absent from the meeting.
- e. Chat box comments and emoji's shall be disabled during virtual meetings.
- f. Members of the public who attend a virtual meeting shall keep their video off and microphone muted at all times unless such person is authorized to speak as provided under the rules for virtual public participation. Any member of the public who interrupts the virtual meeting by failing to remain muted or by enabling video shall be immediately disconnected and removed from the virtual meeting room.

SECTION 3. Virtual public participation allowed during any declared state of emergency. During any declared state of emergency within the City, virtual public participation shall be authorized at any meeting of a public governmental body regardless of whether or not the meeting is a virtual public meeting. Virtual public participation shall be in addition to opportunities for in-person and written public comments. The following minimum procedures will be implemented for virtual public participation:

- a. Members of the public who wish to engage in virtual public participation in order to provide public comment must notify the staff liaison, in writing, at least 24 hours prior to the start of the meeting. The notification shall include the name, address, phone number, email address and topic or agenda item.
- b. The staff liaison will send dial-in or video conferencing instructions to the individual prior to the start of the meeting.
- c. Individuals utilizing virtual public comment shall keep their video off and microphone muted until recognized by the chair to speak. An individual who does not respond within a reasonable amount of time following recognition by the chair may be prevented from speaking.
- d. Individuals utilizing virtual public comment shall be limited to verbal statements and shall not be allowed to use slides or other types of video content from a virtual location.
- e. Time limits and rules for public comment apply to virtual comments and any person using virtual public comment will be automatically disconnected at the end of the allotted time period.

SECTION 4. Effective date. This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage.

PASSED this _____ day of _____, 2021.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor and Presiding Officer

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

City Counselor