

## **A POLICY RESOLUTION**

establishing a policy for city Council Member virtual participation at city council meetings.

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

SECTION 1. The city council hereby establishes the following policy and procedures for Council Member virtual participation at city council meetings:

### **CITY COUNCIL VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION POLICY**

**1. Virtual participation authorized, when.** Virtual participation is available for all public city council meetings, whether regular meetings, work sessions, pre-council meetings, etc. Virtual participation is not available for closed meetings of the Council.

**2. 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).

**3. In-person quorum required, authorized exceptions.** An in-person quorum means at least four (4) Council Members participating in the meeting at the meeting location. Except in the case of an emergency, a quorum of the Council must be present, in-person, in the physical location open to the public at any legislative session of the Council. A legislative session is any meeting where a vote will occur on any ordinance, resolution or policy resolution. An in-person quorum is not required for a Council work session or any other special meeting where a vote on an ordinance, resolution or policy resolution is not conducted. If there are multiple requests for virtual participation which might prevent an in-person quorum at a meeting, the lack of in-person quorum will be discussed by the Mayor (or presiding officer) with those Council Members requesting virtual participation to determine if an in-person quorum may be achieved.

**4. Virtual participation for any legislative session.** Virtual participation by a Council Member during any legislative session requires utilization of real-time video and audio technology. A member participating virtually during a legislative session

must comply by the protocols set forth in this policy in order to participate in the discussion and vote on any agenda item.

**5. Virtual participation for any closed meeting.** Due to the necessity to maintain confidentiality of information presented and discussed during a closed meeting, virtual participation is not allowed. Upon request, the Council Member shall receive a confidential briefing from the City Manager or Mayor on any matters discussed during a closed session from which the Council Member was required to be absent.

**6. Virtual participation for pre-council, work sessions or other miscellaneous meetings.** Virtual participation for any other informal meeting of the City Council does not require real time video technology. However, best practice is to maintain and utilize a video feed where the member may communicate visually and orally to the greatest extent practicable with fellow Council Members. If a roll call vote is taken during a pre-council, work session or other special meeting, an in-person quorum and real time video and audio technology is required to be utilized to conduct the roll call vote (example: vote to go into closed session is a roll call vote commonly made during a pre-council meeting).

**7. Declared emergency.** In the event of an emergency, the rules set forth in this policy may be suspended by the Council in whole or in part in order to allow remote meeting participation by any and all Council Members to the greatest extent authorized under Missouri law. In such instance, a statement of emergency giving rise to the waiver of the virtual meeting participation policy shall be stated at the meeting and recorded in the minutes.

**8. Advance notice required.** It will be important for any Council Member who will be missing a meeting to communicate the intended absence as soon as possible when a conflict arises preventing in-person attendance. Such communication shall at a minimum include the Mayor, City Clerk and City Manager and shall indicate whether the Council Member desires to participate in the meeting virtually. 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 (24) 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. Notification of the virtual participation request must be provided, in writing, to: [cityclerk@como.gov](mailto:cityclerk@como.gov), [eventservices@como.gov](mailto:eventservices@como.gov), [CMO@como.gov](mailto:CMO@como.gov), and [mayor@como.gov](mailto:mayor@como.gov).

**9. Technology utilized for virtual participation.** City staff will designate the virtual meeting platform to be utilized for virtual meeting participation and will provide instructions for connection to the meeting platform. The Council Member participating virtually is required to educate themselves on the operating functions of the meeting platform and may be provided resources by city staff which are

available for self-learning. In-home training or in-home set up of equipment or other technology required for virtual participation to assist a Council Member is the primary responsibility of the Council Member and is not permitted to be conducted by city staff. In the event of electrical, technological or equipment failures which interrupt or prohibit the member from being both seen and heard during a legislative session of the City Council, the member seeking to participate virtually understands and acknowledges the member will be deemed absent from the meeting until such time as the member can be both seen and heard again.

**10. Presiding officer attendance.** The best practice is for the presiding officer to be physically present at the meeting location. In the event the Mayor is unable to attend the meeting in-person, the Mayor Pro Tem shall be designated to preside over the meeting at the physical meeting location. In the absence of the Mayor Pro Tem, a presiding officer for the meeting who is located at the physical meeting location shall be designated by the Council. In the event of an emergency where all members are participating virtually, the presiding officer may preside over the meeting from a remote location, provided all of the other meeting requirements set forth in this policy are met.

**11. Council Member responsibilities.** Each Council Member participating virtually is responsible for the following:

- a. Communicating with Mayor, City Clerk and City Manager as soon as conflict preventing in-person attendance at a meeting is determined.
- b. Ensuring electronic device to be used to connect to the meeting is in good working order and will connect to the meeting platform (the city does not provide any specialized equipment beyond what is typically offered to a Council Member for use in carrying out regular duties).
- c. Ensuring adequate internet or telecommunications service necessary to attend the meeting using the virtual meeting platform is available at the remote location.
- d. Arriving to the virtual platform meeting room at least fifteen (15) minutes in advance in order to ensure everything is working correctly.
- e. Having the camera on at all times during the meeting and remaining live (i.e., do not place a static picture of oneself as a substitute for live camera). If the camera is turned off, or the Council Member walks away from the camera such that the member is no longer visible on the screen, the member will be considered as having left the meeting room.
- f. Muting the microphone when not speaking, and unmuting it when speaking.

- g. Raising a hand when wanting to speak.
- h. Waiting to be recognized by the presiding officer before speaking and following all rules of decorum.
- i. Having a high-quality microphone to ensure quality audio interaction.
- j. Being in a private, secure space without distractions, i.e., no family, non-service animal pets, etc.
- k. Ensuring adequate lighting and that there are no bright windows or lighting behind the Council Member which would obscure or shadow the face of the Council Member in the video feed of the meeting platform.
- l. Wearing appropriate clothing, i.e., something similar to what the member would wear if attending an in-person meeting.
- m. Not participating in a virtual meeting while engaging in a physical activity or at any other time or location which might create a hazard to self or others, such as driving a car, operating a boat, etc.

**12. Mayor responsibilities.** The Mayor, or presiding officer, in the meeting location, is responsible for the following:

- a. Recognizing a member who is participating virtually to speak.
- b. Communicating expectations, protocols and decorum with the member participating virtually.
- c. Muting a member who is determined by the Mayor to be out of order.
- d. Ensuring a roll call vote is conducted for all items.

**13. Staff responsibilities.** City staff is responsible for the following:

- a. Ensuring a virtual meeting link is sent to any Council Member participating remotely via email at least one (1) hour prior to the meeting time. Separate meeting links may be sent for pre-council and regular meeting activities.
- b. Providing access to electronic copies of meeting materials prepared by staff that were not included with the agenda packet to the member participating remotely.
- c. Setting up the virtual meeting platform for viewing by the Council Members and public at the in-person meeting location.

- d. Disabling all chat box comments and emojis in the virtual meeting platform during the meeting.

SECTION 2. This policy resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage.

ADOPTED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

ATTEST:

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City Clerk

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Mayor and Presiding Officer

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

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City Counselor