INFORMATION MEMO
City Options for Meeting Remotely

The COVID-19 public health emergency and Governor Walz’s Executive Order 20-20 (“Stay Home MN”) requires city councils to make alternative meeting plans and still comply with the Open Meeting Law. Cities can conduct meetings via telephone conference calls or video-based conference if the public is provided with an effective way to monitor such meetings, such as public distribution of the teleconference number in the meeting posting. Posted notices must provide instructions for how the public may access the remote meeting, whether it is to be held via teleconference or video conference. This includes providing the telephone number, video conference link, and any necessary passcodes or other login information. This guide refers to meetings held via phone conference call or video-based conference as “teleconference meetings.”

RELEVANT LINKS:

I. Steps to Holding Teleconference Meetings

A. Before the Teleconference Meeting

1. Declaration of Inability to Meet in Person

   • The presiding officer, chief legal counsel, or chief administrative officer for the governing body must make a finding that it is not practical or prudent to meet in person because of a health pandemic or an emergency declared under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 12.

   • Governor Walz’s declaration of peacetime emergency gives cities the ability to hold meetings by teleconference, but one of these city officials still needs to make a finding that meeting in person is not practical due to the pandemic emergency.

   • For most cities, the mayor will make this determination. See the League’s Model Declaration for Electronic Meetings for a template declaration. This only needs to be accomplished before the first teleconference meeting and will provide continuing authority for future teleconference meetings.

   • Make a quick review of your city’s ordinances to make sure there isn’t anything there unique to your city that gets in the way of remote meetings or hearings. Be ready to amend any such ordinances at your first meeting as necessary to allow remote meetings or hearings. From this point on, this document assumes your meetings follow the Open Meeting Law without any additional local restriction.
2. **Ensure Remote Access for the Public**
   - Before meeting by teleconference, city staff should make sure that a platform will be used that ensures the public has a way to remotely monitor the meeting. This requirement must be met under the Open Meeting Law.
   - A city official should acquire a teleconferencing number and entrance code from a teleconferencing services provider. If a video-based service is used, a link to join and/or passcode will be provided.
   - The services listed in this document may be used, but other reputable providers can be found.
   - Keep in mind that the public must be allowed to monitor the teleconference, so they should have a teleconference number and access code they can use to call in. For video-based services, this will be a link and/or passcode.
   - Note that the open meeting laws generally do not require the city to allow the public to comment or otherwise participate in regular meetings. The council, in its discretion, may allow a public comment period. (Required Public Hearings would be an exception.)
   - The presiding officer should remind the public that they are allowed to hear the meeting but are expected to remain quiet during the council’s business. If the city council intends to allow public comment, it should explain when public comment will be allowed and how it will be administered during the teleconference. If possible, a city official should make use of the online call management features available on most teleconferencing applications. Such features allow the officer to mute or unmute those on the call who are disruptive, whether intentionally or inadvertently.

3. **Provide Notice of the Teleconference Meeting**
   - In order to hold a teleconference meeting, the open meeting law requires the city to provide notice of the regular meeting location, of the fact that some members may participate by telephone or other electronic means, and of the method the public can use to monitor the meeting from a remote location. See the League’s model Notice of Electronic Meeting for a template notice.
   - The notice must contain all the information needed for the public to monitor the meeting, usually a telephone number and access code for teleconferencing or a link and/or password for video-based conferences.
   - Keep in mind that, in addition to giving this notice, the city also must follow regular notice requirements of the Open Meeting Law. This depends on whether the meeting is a regular, special, or emergency council meeting.
Best practices are for the city to utilize additional methods of notice, in addition to posting. This could be the city’s website, email lists, or social media accounts. This will ensure the notice reaches members of the public that do not check the regular posting place or cannot because of shelter-in-place orders.

4. **Agenda Packet Distributed to Public**

If possible, the agenda packet that councilmembers have during the meeting should be made available to the public. The agenda packet could be posted for download on a website or shared cloud storage or can be uploaded to a video-based conferencing application.

B. **At First Teleconference Meeting**

1. **Council Makes Unfeasibility Findings**

- For teleconference meetings in non-pandemic emergencies, the open meeting law requires that the public be allowed to be at the regular meeting location to remotely monitor the meeting, and a councilmember or city staff member must be present at the regular meeting location to facilitate that access. Both these requirements do not need to be followed if the council makes a finding that they are unfeasible due to the health pandemic.
- See the League’s model resolution Establishing Unfeasibility of In-Person Meetings for a template resolution.
- **If the mayor has also declared a local emergency, these findings can be combined with the required council resolution extending the local emergency. Cities can use the League’s model resolution Extending Covid-19 Emergency in this situation.**
- If the council makes these unfeasibility findings, no one has to be present at the regular meeting location, and city hall can remain closed to the public. This eliminates the risk of any public gathering or social distancing issues. The council can address these findings again, as circumstances improve.

2. **During Each Teleconference Meeting**

a. All members of the body participating in the meeting, wherever their physical location, can hear one another and hear all testimony and discussion.

- It may be helpful to have each councilmember identify themselves at the start of the meeting, and each time they speak.
• During the teleconference meeting, all councilmembers must be able to hear one another and any public comment or testimony. This may become difficult if persons speak over one another. The presiding officer should communicate this and other rules to those on the teleconference meeting.

Minn. Stat. § 13D.021, subd. 1(5).

b. All votes of the body are conducted by roll call so each member’s vote can be identified and recorded.

The presiding officer must ensure that every vote is taken by roll call. Councilmembers should identify themselves and their yes or no votes for the record.

c. Record the Meeting (Optional)

• Some teleconferencing applications include optional audio recording of the call. City councils may choose to audio record the meeting.
• If the meeting is recorded, it must be kept pursuant to the city’s records retention schedule.

Note: If the council closes a meeting that is authorized to be closed by the open meeting law, the meeting must be recorded unless it is closed for the attorney-client privilege exception.

II. Technology Options

A. Call Bridge (Teleconference Meetings)

• A call bridge is used to hold a meeting by teleconference, using only traditional home telephones or cell phones.
• The two main free call bridge options are FreeConferenceCall.com and FreeConference.com. Popular fee-based options are UberConference and Join.me.
• Fee-based options are generally more reliable than the free options.
• A phone number and meeting code are given to participants, who use the phone number and meeting code to enter the meeting.
• Advantages – free options are available, easy setup, does not rely on internet access.
• Challenges – long distance charges may apply, verbal only, susceptible to persons talking over one another.
• Success relies on good meeting order and practices.
B. Virtual Meeting (Video-Based Conference Meetings)

- Real-time interactions that take place over the internet using integrated audio and video.
- Operator schedules a meeting and obtains a virtual meeting link and call-in information for a traditional audio call.
- Participants use electronic devices (computer, smart phone, tablet and cameras) to connect.
- Advantages – full audio and video experience.
- Disadvantages – internet stability and bandwidth are required, pricing is generally more expensive, more complexity for participants with equipment and software, and may require an operator that is not participating in the meeting.

III. Conclusion

Remote meetings are new territory for most cities. Proper meeting management takes on a heightened role when city councils are meeting remotely and using technology that councilmembers, staff, and the public are not familiar with. Because the mayor is typically the presiding officer at council meetings, their role takes on added significance. Some suggestions on proper meeting management from the Minnesota Mayor’s Handbook:

- Interpret and impartially enforce any applicable meeting management policies, bylaws, or rules or order.
- Clearly communicate rules and expectations to members of the public listening to the meeting remotely.
- Recognizing speakers to ensure no one speaks over one another.
- For remote meetings, ensuring that votes on motions and resolutions are taken by roll call of each councilmember.
- For public hearings required by law, ensuring the public has a meaningful opportunity to present testimony, using the methods by city has prescribed.

The Minnesota Mayors Handbook also has sample rules of conduct and rules of order that can provide guidance.

This is a lot to digest, especially considering the all the other concerns cities face now. The League can help answer questions and provide further guidance. Please contact the League Research and Information Service with questions.
APPENDIX

Technology Options Details (both free & charge-based)

A. Using FreeConferenceCall.com

Benefits: No cost to use. Toll free option for small cost.
Limitations: Phone only – no computer/visual use. Call circuits can be busy, requiring multiple attempts to join.

Set up instructions:
1. One person needs to make a Host account online. Enter your email and choose a password, then click “create my free account”.
2. You will receive a confirmation email. There are the details of your conference call dial-in number, access code, host PIN and instructions.

To host an audio conference call:
- Notify participants of the date and time of the conference call and provide the dial-in number and access code.
- Dial the dial-in number.
- When prompted, enter the access code, followed by pound (#).
- Press star (*) to enter the host PIN, followed by pound (#).

To join as a participant:
- Dial the dial-in number.
- When prompted, enter the access code, followed by pound (#).

To control who is heard in the conference:
- The host can press *5 to mute all participants. Participants can mute/unmute themselves by pressing *6. If the host presses *5 a second time, it will mute everyone again, and pressing *5 a third time returns to open conversation.

To record the audio (Free with this service):
- For the host to start recording, press *9 and then press 1 to confirm. To stop and save the recording, press *9 again and 1 to confirm.
- The recording will be online at https://www.freeconferencecall.com/profile/history, where you can listen to it or download it. To listen to the recording via phone, call (978) 990-5099. When prompted, enter your Host’s access code, followed by pound (#). Press pound (#) again and the most recent recording will play.

For Toll-Free Participation:
- The Host must upgrade and pay $0.02 per minute used. It will give your participants an (800) toll-free dial-in conference number to ensure they won't incur any long-distance
charges.

- From your online profile https://www.freeconferencecall.com/profile/, click the small orange text that says “Buy toll-free”. A pop-up will have a green button to “Add to Cart”, which you should click. It will take you to another page.
- Enter your billing information, click the ‘I’m not a robot’ box, and click the box to ‘agree to terms and conditions’. Click the orange “CONFIRM” button.
- You will receive information with the (800) toll-free number to use, and the billing will be charged at the end of the month for the minutes you’ve used.
- For an example of one meeting, a toll-free call for 8 participants, about 60 minutes long, at 2 cents per minute would cost the host about $10.00 total.
B. Using FreeConference.com

Instructions for use:
- One person needs to make a Host account online. Click the orange “Sign up free” button. Enter your name, your email and choose a password, check the box “I have read the terms and conditions”, then click “create account”. Or, log in using your Facebook account.
- From online, at https://hello.freeconference.com/conf/conferences/create, click the blue words “Dial-in Information”. A pop-up will tell you your dial-in number, access code, and host PIN.

To host an audio conference call:
- Notify participants of the date and time of the conference call and provide the dial-in number and access code.
- Dial the dial-in number.
- Enter the host PIN, followed by pound (#).
- Say your name, followed by pound (#).

To join as a participant:
- Dial the dial-in number.
- When prompted, enter the access code, followed by pound (#).
- Say your name, followed by pound (#).

To control who is heard in the conference:
- Participants can mute/unmute themselves by pressing *6.

For Toll-Free Participation, Recording, and More:
- The Host must upgrade to pay at least $9.99 per month. It will give your participants an (800) toll-free dial-in conference number to ensure they won't incur any long-distance charges. You will also be able to make and access recordings.
- From your online profile, click the small orange text or button that says “Upgrade”. It will take you to another page.
- Select the package you want.
- Enter your billing information. Click the blue “Pay” button.
- You will receive the (800) toll-free number to use.
- This toll-free service upgrade gives a limited number of ‘premium minutes.’ For the $24.99/month subscription, for an example of one meeting, a toll-free call for 8 participants, about 60 minutes long would be included. Each additional meeting would cost the host $0.08 per minute used, per participant.
C. Using Zoom

http://zoom.us Questions? Resources and Help Center

Video Tutorial

Benefits: Video calls or audio calls. Free account for 40-minute limit, or upgrade for a small fee for longer. 100 people can join.

Limitations: This is primarily used for computer audio and visual.

Instructions to create an account:
• All participants need to create an account online at https://zoom.us/signup. You can enter an email address. Go to your emails to find the Zoom confirmation email, and click the button or link to activate your account. You will create a username and password. You can also use a Google account or Facebook account to log in.

To download the necessary software:
• From your profile, in the top right corner there is blue text “Host a Meeting”. A drop-down list will appear and you can click “With Video On”.
• Click the blue text in the center of the page that says “Download and Run Zoom”.
• Find the download called “zoomusLauncher.zip”. It will be on your internet browser, or in your computer’s Downloads file. Double click the .zip folder and wait a moment.
• Double click the blue icon “Zoom Launcher” to install. If there is a pop-up, click “Open” or “Allow”. This is the software program, the desktop application to help with your video calls. “zoom.us” is now installed on your computer.

To host a meeting:
• Go to MEETINGS, on the left side of the page, you’re your online profile. Select SCHEDULE A MEETING.
• Set your meeting up like this:
  o Pick a title.
  o Add a description.
  o Set the time and date.
  o Set the time zone.
  o Leave the duration at 1 hour (or adjust, it won’t matter).
  o Registration – uncheck Meeting Password – uncheck
  o Video Host and Participant – ON Audio – BOTH
  o Enable Join Before Host – up to you. Do you want families to be in there before you? Either way. Mute Participants Upon Entry – YES, it helps with the chaos
  o Enable Waiting Room – I would keep off
  o Only Authenticated Users Can Join – leave unchecked
  o Record the Meeting Automatically – ON THE HOST COMPUTER leave this checked so it saves the file to your computer.
  o Save. It will pull you into the launch pad for the meeting.
• The URL for the meeting is that blue line at the very bottom. Send that to your participants.
as soon as you schedule your meeting. (You can do it days and even weeks before).

- If it’s time RIGHT NOW to have your meeting, you just push START THIS MEETING.
- If you scheduled your meeting prior, you will go to your MEETINGS tab from your dashboard and they will be listed there. You would click the blue meeting topic to launch to the screen above.
- OK so say you are ready to have your meeting. Press the START THIS MEETING button and your meeting will start.
- You will be prompted with two options – YES OPEN IN ZOOM and Connect with Computer Audio. As soon as you open up the meeting, anyone with the link can join. Arrive early to get everything set up you may want.
- Set YOUR dashboard to show the participant list and chat box. As the administrator of the meeting it will be helpful for you to see both. There is a black bar at the bottom of your page that will extend up and down as you hover over it.
- Click Participant and Chat and the boxes will appear.
  Options:
  - Mute & Video – These two are located in the bottom black bar. They allow you to shut off and turn on your sound and video. If you shut off your video, you profile picture will default.
  - Invite – Say you need to get someone the link while you are in your meeting, click the invite and COPY URL. You can then send it to them. (Trick – the numbers at the end of the URL are the meeting number).
  - Participants – This box will show you who is in your meeting. You can MUTE ALL, UNMUTE ALL, and there are a few other group options at the bottom of this box (take a peek). Each individual too you can control the video and audio of those people so it’s a helpful box to have open.
  - To end your meeting, select END MEETING in the bottom right hand corner. Because you set it up to save to your device, it will start the saving process for you.
  - Free video calls are limited to 40-minute calls, for up to three participants. To upgrade: Go to https://zoom.us/pricing to view plans.
D. Using GotoMeeting

**Benefits**: Providing limited time free toll-free number for towns to use for public meetings. Ability to mute and unmute participants. 14 day free trial. Screen sharing, conference calling, video conferencing, mobile conferencing, meeting recording and transcription, conference room equipment, and more. Up to 250 participants. GoToMeeting has a feature which allows for a host or someone joining a meeting to receive a phone call, rather than dialing in.

**Limitations**: $16 per month per organization.

**GotoMeeting Instructions**: See GotoMeeting Help Page for instructional videos on installation, scheduling meetings, joining meetings, and audio features.
E. Using UberConference

Benefits: Video conferencing, screen sharing, built-in AI voice intelligence technology useful for searching transcriptions of meetings, no PINS, no downloads. There is a group chat feature allowing file sharing. There can be up to 100 participants. Free version available. During COVID-19, the free version now has a longer call duration and allows up to 50 people to participate. You can start an UberConference at any time just by dialing your UberConference number. Just share your UberConference URL or conference number and you're good to go.

Limitations: $15 per month for UberConference Business. The “host” may need to add individuals to the call by their phone number or UberConference account.

To create an account:

- Create a new account:
  - https://www.uberconference.com/signup
- Team members create their new accounts:

To host a meeting:

- Click on Schedule for Later to launch your scheduler.
  - Here you will enter: the date of the conference, name of the conference, time, conference duration (optional), recurring or non-recurring, and the time zone.
  - Next, you will add your Participants. If you have imported your contacts, you’ll be able to pull up their information by entering their name, phone, or email address. If you have not imported your contacts, you manually enter your Participant’s information. Press enter after each entry to add new participants. If you have a business account, you can have UberConference dial out to participants.

- To start a conference online:
  - You need to login to UberConference using either Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari 11 or the Mac or Windows App. On your conference dashboard, click Start Conference. Next, you will pick your audio and video options. After this, you will automatically be added to the conference where you will see your Organizer card. To start the conference, both the Organizer and Participants must connect.

- To start a conference on the phone:
  - Dial your conference # from your Organizer phone then enter your Organizer PIN, if required. Once the Participants join and connect their audio, the conference case officially starts.

- To start a conference using Dial-out by Phone:
  - Select Join by phone, confirm the number set up with your UberConference account, and UberConference will dial out to you. When dialing out to your phone, you will be placed into the conference as view only on your desktop. Once the Participants join and connect their audio, the conference officially starts.

- To join a conference online:
- Enter your Organizer’s URL in your web browser. Next, you will verify your participant info and click join. After selecting your audio and video options, you will either join or be placed on hold until the Organizer joins.

- **To join a conference with your phone:**
  - Call the Organizer’s conference #, you may be placed on hold until your Organizer joins.

- **Operating controls during the meeting:**
  - **Speaker:** Whoever is talking will have a green box around their participant card
  - **Meeting Information:** Click here to see, duration of the conference, name your conference, invite additional participants, enable/disable voice intelligence and call recording
  - **Participants:** Need to see a list of your participants? Just click here a list of those on your call will appear. You will also have the ability to lock your conference, mute everyone, or mute/unmute individual participants
  - **Chat:** Click here to start a chat with your participants or view the chats from others
  - **Change the Call Layout:** During screen share mode, click here to flip back between viewing a screen share/grid view or when no one is screen sharing, click here to flip between viewing a pinned video's video and between grid view
  - **Share your Screen:** Click here to start a screen share.
  - **Change Device Settings:** Click here to change your audio settings for your call
  - **Organizer Controls:** Additional organizer controls like Mute All or Lock your Conference
  - **Mute:** Click here to mute/unmute yourself
  - **Video:** Click here to turn on or off your video stream
  - **Hang up:** You will be able to select if you want to end the conference or hang up yourself only.
F. Using Join.me

**Benefits:** Video and audio conferencing with screensharing options. Compatible with any device. Meetings may be scheduled in advance. There is a free trial option. [50% limited time discount for purchase of join.me](https://az766929.vo.msecnd.net/document-library/joinme/pdf/english/jm-guides-feature-sheet-v4.pdf). Pro and Business licenses include local conference numbers in the U.S. and 50+ countries, optional toll-free numbers, and audio controls for meeting hosts such as Active Speaker, Individual Mute and Roll Call.

**Limitations:** Monthly prices: $10 for up to five people, $20 for some options (Pro), $30 for all options (Business) the price is per user.

**Join me Features Guide:**


**Join me Instructions:**

http://www.rootsusers.org/downloads/join.me-Instructions.pdf
G. Using Webex

**Benefits:** Free version available. During COVID-19, free version includes meetings up to 100 participants, no time limitations, call-in for audio, unlimited number of meetings, 1 GB of cloud storage, video conferencing, mobile and security features. **Special Offer** with months free - Use code at checkout: **wecare2020**

**Limitations:** $13.50 per month per host for up to 50 participants. $17.95 per month per host for up to 100 participants.

**To Host a Meeting:**

**Schedule a Meeting**
Sign in to your Webex site and from the Modern View home page, select **Schedule**. Fill in the necessary meeting information and select **Schedule**.

Schedule a Meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting topic</td>
<td>Quarterly Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting password</td>
<td>JSNoCDym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and time</td>
<td>Thursday, May 31, 2018 3:10 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>(UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US &amp; Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recurrence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendees</td>
<td>Separate email addresses with a comma or semicolon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Start a Meeting**
At the scheduled meeting time, sign in to your Webex site. From the home page, under **Upcoming Meetings**, locate your meeting, and then select **Start**.

If you don't see your meeting, you can select **View all meetings** to see more scheduled meetings.

You can also **start a meeting in your Personal Room**.

**Connect Audio**

Before you join or start a meeting you can choose the settings you use for audio in the meeting.

- Click the audio connection options in the Webex Meetings app.

- Choose how you want to hear the audio in the meeting:
- **Use computer for audio**—Use your computer with a headset or speakers. This is the default audio connection type.

- You can change your headset, speakers, and microphone.

- **Call me**—Enter or select the work or home phone number that you'd like the meeting to call.

- **Call in**—Dial in from your phone when the meeting starts. A list of global call-in numbers is available after you join the meeting.

- **Don’t connect audio**—You won’t hear any audio in the meeting through your computer or phone. Use this option if you’re in the meeting room but want to use your computer to share content in the meeting.

- If you want to join the meeting with your audio muted, click **Mute my microphone**.

- You’ll see when your microphone is muted. Click **Unmute my microphone** when you want to speak in the meeting.

---

**Start Your Video**

Before you join or start a meeting you can choose the settings you use for video in the meeting.
If you want to join the meeting with your video turned off, click **Turn off my video**.

You'll see when your video is turned off. Click **Turn on my video** when you want to show your video.

By default, your self-view video shows in mirror view. You can **turn off mirror view** if you want to see yourself in your self-view video the same way that other meeting participants see you.

If you're happy with the audio and video settings that you chose for this meeting, you can **save them for your next meeting**.

To join the meeting from a compatible video device, **connect to a device**.

**Share Content**

To share content during a meeting, from the meeting control panel, select **Share content**.
Record a Meeting
Your meetings are important. If your whole team can't be there, or if you want to remember what was said, record your meeting to share later. The recording includes the audio, video, and presentation.

While in your event, select Recorder and Record to record right away. You and your participants see a red icon at the top right of your window when recording is in process.

When the meeting ends, you can find your recording on the Recordings > My Recorded Meetings page of your Webex site in Modern View. If you recorded in the cloud, when the meeting or event ends, you receive an email with the recording link. Depending on file size and bandwidth, it can take up to 24 hours to receive your recording.

More information for hosting meetings:
https://help.webex.com/id-nyw95a4-CiscoWebexMeetings/Webex-Meetings#Get-Started