



## Policy #GG-014

### Policy Title: **ELECTRONIC MEETING POLICY**

<b>Policy Objective</b>	The need and advantages to holding electronic Council and Committee meetings from time to time is both acknowledged and necessary. This policy is intended to provide guidance for the Town of Strasbourg Council when holding and participating in these meetings.
<b>Authority</b>	Resolution #55/2020
<b>Supporting Bylaw</b>	Bylaw #360/16 Council Procedure Bylaw
<b>Related Policy</b>	n/a

*This policy shall supersede any previous policy passed by the Town of Strasbourg Council.*

### Legislative Authority:

*The Municipalities Act, Section 125*

### Definitions:

- a. **Administrator** - The person appointed as Administrator pursuant to Section 111 of *The Municipalities Act*.
- b. **Committee** - A committee, board, authority or other body duly appointed by Council.
- c. **Council** - The Mayor and Councillors of the Town elected pursuant to the provisions of *The Local Government Election Act, 2015*.
- d. **Mayor** - The Head of Council and, in the absence of the individual elected to the position of Mayor, this duty shall be assumed by the individual appointed by Council as Deputy Mayor.
- e. **Town** - The Town of Strasbourg.

### Policy:

#### 1. STATEMENT

1.1 This policy provides for the use of electronic means for the holding of meetings of the Mayor and Council, including both whole Council meetings and Committee meetings.

1.2 Electronic meetings may be used to hold Council or Committee meetings subject to public notice requirements for any such meeting being met as per the Town's Public Notice Bylaw.

#### 2. REQUIREMENTS

2.1 All participants must have access to the necessary equipment for participation. A right of membership is participation; therefore, the technology used must be accessible to all members to be included in the meeting.

2.2 All rules pertaining to in-person Council or Committee meetings apply equally to electronic meetings, for example, notice, pre-meeting package requirements, quorum, minute-taking, voting, confidentiality requirements, etc.

- 2.3 All meeting participants must ensure they maintain complete privacy in their off-site meeting space. This will ensure all discussions are kept confidential and are only heard by those invited to and attending the meeting.
- 2.4 All provisions and policy related to in-camera meetings and conflict of interest will apply equally for electronic meetings of Council.
- 2.5 The Administrator shall endeavour to record the public portion of the Council meeting, and if possible, upload to the Town's website for public viewing. If the participants so desire, Council members are allowed to record only the public portion of the meeting. Non-public meetings will not be recorded.
- 2.6 Ratepayers are allowed access to the electronic meetings during any public portion by way of electronic meeting log-in invitation. Ratepayers are required to be muted and video shut off. They are not allowed to be present during any non-public portions.
- 2.7 In no circumstance are discussions in the "chat" function of virtual meeting software to be copied and saved by meeting participants or included as part of the official meeting minutes.
- 2.8 Subject to any conditions or limitations provided for under the Act, Regulations, Bylaws or this Policy, a Council member who participates in a meeting through electronic means shall be deemed to be present at the meeting and will be recorded as in attendance at and part of the quorum of the meeting.

### **3. PROCEDURE**

- 3.1 The Mayor will be the chair of the Council meeting. In the event of a Committee meeting, the Head of the Committee will chair the meeting.
- 3.2 Any technology employed will enable every participant to hear and be heard by all other participants in the meeting.
- 3.3 The Mayor will ensure that declarations of conflict of interest are heard by all present and that those participating have an opportunity to verbally declare any conflict.
- 3.4 The meeting will be administered in such a way that the rules governing conflict of interest are complied with.
- 3.5 The electronic means will enable appropriate processes to ensure the security and confidentiality of proceedings, both regular and in-camera meetings. This may mean using separate connections and log-ins for scheduled in-camera sessions.
- 3.6 Attendance shall be taken by the Administrator and duly recorded to ensure participants are recognized as in attendance.
- 3.7 Participants will identify themselves before speaking in order to assist the Administrator in recording the minutes.
- 3.8 Those participating in an electronic meeting shall notify the Mayor of their departure (either temporary or permanent) from the meeting, before absenting themselves, in order to ensure a quorum is maintained.

- 3.9 All meeting participants must have a copy of the meeting package including the agenda prior to the meeting for reference during the electronic meeting.
- 3.10 If possible, motions coming forward at the electronic meeting should be prepared ahead of the meeting with one of the eligible members indicating their willingness to let their name stand as mover, and another as seconder. Prior to the vote, the Mayor will read each motion and indicate the member who is moving and seconding the motion.
- 3.11 Voting at electronic meetings shall be carried out as follows to ensure that accurate records of votes are maintained:
- a. When a vote is called, opposition to the motion is called first.
  - b. If no one is opposed, the motion is considered carried.
  - c. If there is opposition, a roll call vote is held, and the Mayor will announce the number of votes cast in favour or against the motion and whether the motion is carried.
  - d. The Mayor will make the decision as to whether the motion was carried or defeated.
  - e. When the technology does not allow for those votes requiring a secret ballot, a confidential email should be in place between meeting participants and the scrutineer to facilitate secret votes.
- 3.12 To avoid as much disruption as possible and to support seamless dialogue and debate, all participants will keep their electronic devices on mute unless speaking.
- 3.13 Any open chat windows in the technology must be used only to resolve technological problems – it should not be used for side discussions, lobbying other participants or voicing support for motions on the floor. Council members meet and have authority only as a collective with due order.