

Best Practices for a Virtual Local Government Meeting

1. **Have a clear leader - the board chairperson.**
2. **Have an individual aid the chairperson for IT (technology) purposes and to observe the chat box.**
 - a. *Encourage all trustees and the fiscal officer to do a test run or log-on early to ensure equipment is working properly.*
 - b. *Share links and documents in advance, as much as possible.*
 - a. *Encourage people, if using the phone, to dial in from a landline, to ensure a good connection.*
3. **Start on time but give individuals a few minutes to 'get connected'.**
 - a. *If someone joins late, do not catch them up, rather encourage them to speak with someone after the meeting.*
4. **Have the fiscal officer take roll.**
5. **Remind everyone that minutes will be taken, and the meeting complies with Ohio's Open Meetings Act.**
6. **Have a clear agenda and read it at the beginning.**
 - a. *Remember, people may not be able to see your screen even if you are sharing it.*
 - b. *Try to keep the meeting length under one hour.*
 - c. *Only include essential business items.*
7. **Review tele/web-conferencing etiquette and ground rules.**
 - a. *Whether using a phone or online, ask participants to limit background noise by muting their device until called on to speak or the chair asks for questions or public comment.*
 - b. *Remind everyone on the call that there is an agenda that the Board of Trustees will follow and that only the Board of Trustees will be speaking unless the chair has specifically opened the floor for questions or comments.*
 - c. *Remind the public on the call / video that there will be a public comment period at the conclusion of the business portion of the meeting.*
 - d. *Ask people to state their full name prior to speaking. (This is a benefit for those on the phone, as well as the fiscal officer or other township employee taking minutes.)*
 - e. *Tell those on a video conference that if they have a question, they can raise their hand or type the question into the chat feature. For those on a conference call, wait until the Chair asks if there are any questions*
 - f. *For teleconferences, ask participants to pause two seconds before speaking to ensure the previous speaker is finished.*
 - g. *Ask everyone to be patient, as virtual meetings are new for townships and not everyone is comfortable with the technology.*
8. **Proceed with business.**
 - a. *The board chairperson should state clearly that you are starting the meeting now.*
 - b. *Throughout the meeting, ask the media if there are any questions.*
9. **Provide time for public comments.**
 - a. *The board, prior to the meeting, should review their guidelines surrounding public comment, such as time limit.*
10. **Post minutes and referenced documents on your website as soon as possible.**

