

# Public Participation and Electronic Meetings

A guide for meeting the requirements of  
*The Planning and Development Act, 2007* for northern municipalities

This guide is an overview of the public participation requirements for council meetings and public hearings related to planning matters and how to meet these requirements when meeting electronically. Meetings, electronic or in-person, must comply with the legal requirements for public participation outlined in *The Planning and Development Act, 2007*.

## Public Participation & Planning

Councils are required to conduct their meetings in public. Planning matters discussed at council may include, but are not limited to, discretionary use applications, land sales, or subdivision applications.

Some planning matters require public notice so affected persons can submit comments prior to, or attend, the council meeting. People may participate in council discussions by attending the meeting as a delegation.

Other planning matters such as amending or adopting an official community plan or zoning bylaw, or the sale or exchange of dedicated lands requires that council hold a **public hearing**. In these cases, the public must have an opportunity to participate in discussion about the proposed bylaws before, or at the hearing.

### **Council Meeting**

the public can listen or comment as a delegation.

### **Public Hearing**

the public can listen or provide comment.

## Notice of Electronic Council Meetings

If Council is holding an electronic meeting, notice of the meeting must be given to the public (see example public notice below). The notification must include the way in which the meeting is to be conducted (teleconference, video conference etc.) and should include the details of how the public can participate in the meeting such as webinar access login or telephone participate passcode.

Council may also consider amending their Council Procedure Bylaw to establish general procedures to be followed for electronic meetings. Sample wording for an amendment of this type:

1. Members of the public, council and the administrator may participate in a council meeting, public meeting or public hearing by electronic means if:
  - (a) notice of the council meeting, public meeting or public hearing is advertised to the public including the way in which the meeting is to be conducted;
  - (b) the public is able to participate; and
  - (c) all participants are able to communicate adequately with each other during the council meeting.
2. Members participating in a council meeting held by electronic means are deemed to be present at the council meeting.

## Notice of Electronic Public Hearings

Council must provide public notice of an upcoming public hearing in a newspaper according to the requirements in *The Planning and Development Act, 2007*. Additional notification is also recommended on websites and social media pages, local radio, mail outs, or posters. The public notice must include:

- the description and purpose of the bylaw.
- the area affected.
- the date and time of the public hearing.
- how the public can access the proposed bylaw (website address or requesting a copy from the administrator).
- how the public can participate in the hearing (conference call numbers, mailing or email address, web addresses, etc.)

## Electronic Document Sharing

When a discretionary use application, new bylaw or an amendment is being considered under the PDA, a copy must be made available to the public prior to the council meeting or public hearing. Electronic sharing options include:

- posting the bylaw link on the municipal website, the [Planning for Growth North](#) website, or a social media page.
- email or physical copies, upon request.
- online file sharing applications such as Dropbox, OneDrive or Google Drive.

## Electronic Participation Options

When choosing an electronic meeting platform, council should consider residents' access to internet, internet speed (for video) and telephone availability. When setting up and advertising electronic meetings be sure to clarify and publish the appropriate passcode (ex. 'listen-only' or 'participant').

Examples of electronic participation options that meet the requirements of a public hearing include, but are not limited to:

- SaskTel Business conference call:
  - This option can be arranged by calling SaskTel Business Services at 1-844-SASKTEL (1-844-727-5895).
  - SaskTel's teleconferencing service allows you to set the length of the call and participant list, and record the call in a variety of formats.
  - For activations, scheduling a conference call or support call SaskTel at 1-877-402-2665 or visit the website for [services and pricing](#).
- video conference platforms such as [Zoom](#), [GoToMeeting](#), or [Webex](#). These options also include teleconferencing options.

Examples of electronic options that council can use to make meetings public include, but are not limited to:

- local TV or radio station.
- [Facebook Live](#) event.
- [YouTube Live](#) event.

## Conducting an Electronic Public Hearing

The following points are useful when holding an electronic meeting:

- appoint a moderator for the meeting who will:
  - set up and test your system in advance.
  - address technical difficulties or questions during the meeting.
- remind participants to speak clearly and mute their phone when not speaking.
- conduct a roll call.
- technically practice how to go in-camera.
- advise all participants if the meeting is being recorded.
- minutes are still the official record, not audio or video recordings.
- if there are technical difficulties the hearing can be adjourned to a later date. Be sure to set the date before adjourning and re-advertise the new date.

Councils are required to conduct their business in meetings that are open to the public.

## Example Public Notice

### NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC OF ELECTRONIC COUNCIL MEETING

The Village of Northern Lights' next regular scheduled council meeting will be held

**Tuesday May 26th, 2020 at 7:00pm**

By Conference Call

The public can listen in by calling 1-888-123-4567 Listen-only Access ID 123456789

Questions can be emailed to the village at [village@myinternet.ca](mailto:village@myinternet.ca) or

by calling the village office at 306-825-2525

For more details or a detailed guide on how to run a public hearing please contact the Northern Planning & Sustainability Unit, Northern Municipal Services at 1-800-663-1555 or visit [planningforgrowthnorthsk.com](http://planningforgrowthnorthsk.com)