

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of Council

Date: January 4, 2024

From: Mayor, Wilma Wotten

Re: **Electronic Participation at Council, Committee of the Whole and Standing Committee Meetings**

Members of Council,

As you will recall Council, at a Planning and Community Affairs Committee Meeting on November 20, 2023, adopted the following recommendation:

Recommendation PCA-2023-061

Moved by: Councillor Rock

Seconded by: Councillor McDougall

THAT members be permitted to remotely join the special meeting of Council today, currently in recess; and

THAT the Clerk consult with the Mayor to develop criteria to be applied to future meetings where members wish to join remotely.

The Clerk and I have consulted. The Scugog Township Procedural By-law provides in part that:

c) The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, shall establish practices and procedures for electronic participation.

b) Where the Rules of Procedure conflict with the need to facilitate electronic participation, the Chair, in consultation with the Clerk, shall have the authority to modify the Rules of Procedure to ensure Members can effectively participate in the meeting.

Accordingly, I am submitting the attached memorandum establishing practises and procedures for members to participate electronically in meetings. I would expect staff too follow the same basic rules.

I encourage you to carefully review these practises and procedures. While Members are permitted to participate electronically, it is my preference to that all members make best efforts to attend in person. To guide you in your decision to attend electronically, you may wish to consider issues such as weather or road conditions or illness that may lead you to conclude that you will participate remotely.

With all this being said, it is my firm belief that we can have better discussions and reach carefully thought-out decisions by being physically present at our meetings.

The clerk and I are happy to receive your questions.



Mayor, Wilma Wotten

MEMORANDUM

ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION AT COUNCIL, COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE AND STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Introduction:

The Municipal Act, 2001 permits Council to hold electronic meetings where members participate remotely. It also provides for members of Council who are participating electronically to have all the same rights and responsibilities as if they were in physical attendance. This includes counted in determining quorum of members present and providing them access to participate in closed meetings.

The Township of Scugog's Procedural By-law reflects these provisions. The By-law provides in part that:

- a) The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, shall establish practices and procedures for electronic participation.

- b) Where the Rules of Procedure conflict with the need to facilitate electronic participation, the Chair, in consultation with the Clerk, shall have the authority to modify the Rules of Procedure to ensure Members can effectively participate in the meeting.

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to establish practices and procedures with respect to members participating electronically in meetings of Council, Standing Committees, Committee of the Whole. These rules are designed to work within the overall framework of the Council Procedural by-law. These rules shall be posted to the Township website to ensure transparency of operations. From time to time and with gained experience, the rules may be integrated into the Council Procedural By-Law. Currently, Members must notify the Clerk prior to the meeting of their intent to participate.

General Rules:

1. Members must use the EasyConf Connected system employed by the Township of Scugog to participate.
2. Members are responsible to ensure they have enabled pop-ups on their computer to allow for camera and microphone systems to work with the EasyConf Connected system.
3. Members are responsible to ensure they have secure and stable internet service.

4. Members may only participate remotely with the video option “on” to ensure transparency of participation and attendance.
5. The video background should be blurred for personal privacy reasons.
6. Members participating electronically must ensure that their location is appropriately lit and free of interruptions and background noise; use of headphones is encouraged.

Closed Sessions:

The confidentiality of closed session deliberations is of utmost importance.

Members participating electronically in a closed session are responsible for ensuring confidentiality, selecting and participating from a secure location and ensuring that no other individuals are in the room; wearing a headset during the closed session is encouraged.

Should a meeting go into closed session, members participating electronically who have made a declaration of interest on the matter to be discussed shall disconnect from the meeting and may join again once the closed session has concluded. The Clerk or designate may break the connection if necessary. The Member may not return until invited.

If a member is having technical difficulties, please email clerks@scugog.ca for assistance. Best efforts will be made to address technical issues, but the Chair may decide to continue the meeting should a quick fix not be available. Accordingly, to ensure business continuity the Chair may determine that Council may proceed without the Member.

Where a Member of Council encounters technical difficulties or is otherwise unable to participate electronically in a meeting, the validity of the meeting or any action taken at the meeting are not affected, provided that quorum is not lost.