



**VSBA**

**Virginia School Boards Association**

Leadership • Advocacy • Support

# **DIGITAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS**

**A GUIDE FOR VIRGINIA  
SCHOOL DIVISIONS**

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This guide is created by the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) to support public school divisions in transitioning their school board meetings from a physical location to any digital video conferencing platform. Many platforms are available and you will see information on different options included in this guide. VSBA does not endorse one platform for digital video conferencing over another, however since many school divisions haven chosen to use Zoom, much of this guide will focus on the capabilities within the Zoom platform.

This guide is organized into four sequential steps for transitioning a school board from meeting physically to meeting digitally: assess, plan, test and launch. The guide includes links to platform-created tutorials on specific actions or topics relate to running a digital meeting. This guide may be useful for divisions transitioning to digital platforms other than Zoom although specific settings and options may not have counterparts on alternative platforms.

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## **Electronic Participation in School Board Meetings**

The Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits school board members to participate in meetings electronically in two situations. In the first situation, a quorum of the board must be physically assembled but a member (or members) participate electronically. In this situation, the member(s) who want to participate electronically must notify the chair that 1) they are unable to attend due to either a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents their physical attendance, or 2) that they are unable to attend due to a personal matter and identify the personal matter with specificity (electronic attendance due to a personal matter is limited to two meetings each calendar year). When members participate electronically when a quorum is physically assembled, the minutes of the meeting must record

- the remote location from which the member(s) participated, and
- the fact that the member(s) participated electronically either because of a disability or other medical condition, or the specific nature of the personal matter cited by the member(s) who participated electronically.

In the second situation, all school board members may participate electronically when the Governor has declared a state of emergency. In that situation, the purpose of the meeting must be to address the emergency; boards may only make decisions that must be made immediately and where the failure to do so could result in irrevocable public harm. Whether any particular action by a school board fits within that description requires a fact-specific determination that should be made in consultation with the school board's lawyer. When a board meets without a quorum physically assembled, the minutes of the meeting must reflect

- the nature of the emergency
- the fact that the meeting was held by electronic means, and
- the type of electronic communication means by which the meeting was held.

In addition to the information above, local school board policies must be consulted for additional details on electronic participation in board meetings. For boards that are members of VSBA Policy Services, the relevant Policy is BDD Electronic Participation in Meetings from Remote Locations. In addition, VSBA has heard that some school boards are meeting electronically pursuant to an ordinance adopted by the local appropriating body. Those are purely local arrangements beyond the scope of this publication. If a school board meets electronically pursuant to such an ordinance, it should do so on the advice of local counsel.

# STEP 1: ASSESS

## Assess Team

Every division has a team of people who are involved in planning and executing school board meetings. This same team will need to be informed about how their roles change and remain the same in a digital environment. We suggest one additional role to what every division currently has, an online platform session host. We recommend that this role is not assigned to the board chair or superintendent who already have responsibilities within the board meeting. Instead, we recommend someone from division staff with an aptitude and familiarity with technology and the chosen platform in particular, to be the designated host to run the platform and troubleshoot any technical issues that may arise for school board members or public attendees during the meeting.

The following is a summary of responsibilities of those running a smooth and compliant board meeting:

<b>Board Clerk</b>	calls roll, monitors presence of a quorum, takes minutes, monitors BoardDocs
<b>Superintendent</b>	provides necessary documentation, updates, and makes recommendations to the board
<b>Board Chair</b>	chairs the meeting
<b>Meeting Host</b>	runs Zoom, or comparable platform and manages related devices by muting/unmuting speakers, troubleshooting any technology/platform issues that arise during the course of the meeting

There may be others who are helpful to this effort. After reading through the accessibility and accommodations section of this guide, you may decide additional roles and staff are necessary.

## Additional Platforms

As mentioned, there are platforms other than Zoom available for school boards to utilize during this time. Below is a quick glance at some of the other available platforms. This guide will focus on the capabilities within the Zoom platform, however many of the considerations of transitioning to an online meeting should be determined prior to switching to any platform.



## **Assess Technology**

School board members and staff should use school division-provided devices and accounts when possible. This addresses security concerns and allows division staff to effectively support and troubleshoot technology issues that may arise.

The following questions could begin an assessment of current technology capacity as well as any potential challenges to be addressed in transitioning to a digital meeting on Zoom's or any other service's platform.

- Do your school board members and administration have division-provided devices with internet access, microphone and speaker capabilities?
- If not division-provided, do individual board members each have mobile phones, tablets or computers with these capacities? What is known about these devices and their capabilities?
- Do school board members have an email or access to the BoardDocs (or other electronic board meeting) platform in order to receive a digital version of the board packet — agenda, documents and information needed for deliberating and voting on board business at the meeting?
- Do school board members have an appropriate location where background noise or other interference can be minimized and nothing inappropriate will appear in the background of their video image?
- Does your platform have capacity to provide a link to the online session to comply with the notice requirements of the FOIA ?
- Will your community have wireless or other internet access to join the meeting and submit public comment? If not, could the division provide a wireless access point that provides access while still adhering to state health and social distancing guidance, or has the division identified other community locations that have wireless network availability that adheres to social distancing guidance?

## **Assess Timeline**

Once school division leaders have assessed both the human capacity and technological capacity for this transition, a timeline for planning, testing and implementation should be created and communicated to the team, including the board. Remember your requirements for public notification and listen to the team and board for any scheduling delays or mitigating factors that may cause delay.

Also consider the meeting time frame when assessing your timeline and preparing to provide public notification of the meeting. Zoom and other online meeting and livestreaming platforms are experiencing unprecedented volume of network traffic based on the current social distancing guidance; starting your meeting on the half-hour or other increment may result in fewer technology glitches and dropped meeting connections.

# Step 2: PLAN

## Zoom Webinar or Zoom Meeting?

	Meeting	Webinar
<b>Description</b>	Zoom meetings are ideal for hosting more interactive sessions where you'll want to have lots of audience participation or break your session into smaller groups.	Think of webinars like a virtual lecture hall or auditorium. Webinars are ideal for large audiences or events that are open to the public. Typically, webinar attendees do not interact with one another. Though Zoom provides options for you to get more social with your attendees, your average webinar has one or a few people speaking to an
<b>Best used for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small to large groups (2+ participants) for: Customer-facing meetings</li> <li>• Sales meetings</li> <li>• Training</li> </ul>	Large events and public broadcasts (50+ attendees) such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town halls</li> <li>• Quarterly updates</li> <li>• Educational lectures</li> </ul>
<b>Typically used by</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event hosts</li> <li>• SVPs and C-Suite</li> </ul>
<b>Cost</b>	Free and <a href="#">Paid subscription</a> options available.	<a href="#">Paid Add-on</a> , available to Pro or higher subscriptions.

Zoom has the option to set up a Zoom Meeting or a Zoom webinar. Note the key differences on the chart from Zoom to the left.

To see a full comparison of features, visit the following Zoom resource: [Meetings vs. Webinars](#).

For school board meetings, using the Zoom Webinar format allows school board members and staff to be designated as “panelists” which offers more control in participating in the meeting than those in the public audience who are designated as “participants.” Participants can only participate in the webinar meeting when granted access by the Zoom host.

Keep in mind that Zoom limits participants based on which type of subscription you have. For school divisions who need to reach a larger public audience, livestreaming offers that option. Zoom allows for both webinars and meetings to be livestreamed. If divisions choose to livestream through another platform (like Facebook or YouTube), division leadership should consult with their information technology (IT) staff and

any policy regarding acceptable use of technology to ensure those platform settings follow division practice and policy. If possible, comments should be turned off on livestreaming platforms. This ensures that the public is not commenting on the livestream expecting to have a response and the comment section does not become a distraction to the livestreamed meeting. The purpose of the livestream is to widen opportunity for the public to view the meeting, not to provide an alternative and unlimited comment window.

To set up a livestream option for your board meeting in Zoom, please click the following link for a step-by-step tutorial: [Livestreaming Meetings or Webinars Through a Custom Service](#).

To see the overview of Zoom-defined roles in a webinar and roles defined for meetings, visit the following links: [Roles in a Webinar](#) and [Roles in a Meeting](#).

The following are several important features you will want to consider when deciding to use Zoom Meeting or Zoom Webinar.

### ***Zoom Meeting***

- In Zoom Meeting, participants are more difficult to manage because each has control of muting/ unmuting themselves at any point. The Zoom host can remove participants who do not understand how to navigate the platform and those who are looking to assert themselves, both which could be highly disruptive to a school board meeting.
- School board members and staff do not have any additional privileges or designations — they are assigned as participants. This could make roll call and voting more difficult.
- During public comment, members of the public would need to use the Chat feature to indicate their desire to be recognized. The chat box is the only method to communicate without unmuting attendees to speak.

### ***Zoom Webinar***

- School divisions should be clear that if a member of the public wishes to issue public comment during the meeting, he/she should register early to secure a spot as a meeting participant. In the communication with a potentially larger group of public observers, divisions should communicate how members of the public can view the livestream and communicate to the board and division through alternative means (i.e., division email and division staff phone numbers).
- Panelists — school board members and division staff — may unmute themselves to speak or the host may unmute them. But other participants are unable to unmute to potentially disrupt or talk over a school board member or staff.
- The Raise Hand feature can be used by members of the public to indicate their desire to submit public comment. The Zoom host can acknowledge them and unmute for their public comment.

It should be noted that anyone joining Zoom meetings or webinars via their phone (using the dial-in number provided after registration) may not be able to use the Chat, Raise Hand, or Q&A features. This may not allow a member of the public joining only by phone to submit public comment. You should consult with your school board attorney and information technology staff to determine whether additional options should be made available for public comment. Members of the public always have other ways to communicate with the school division and its board, via letters, email, etc.

### ***Schedule the Zoom Webinar or Meeting***

There are many settings to consider when setting up a digital board meeting on Zoom. For security reasons, scheduling with the required registration that issues an automatic approval is recommended. In requiring registration, the division forces email authentication and reduces the potential for spammers disturbing the meeting. By choosing the automatic approval, the division avoids staff time dedicated to manual approval and avoids a potential public complaint for those who may register right before the meeting but were not manually approved.

Zoom does allow for registration while the meeting is in progress. The division's Zoom host would want to be aware that members of the public may register late and join throughout the duration of the meeting — just like members of the public may come and go during a physical meeting of the board.

### ***Recommended Zoom Settings when using Zoom Webinars***

The following are recommended settings for digital school board meetings conducted through Zoom Webinar.

- Require registration (if recurring, for each occurrence) for access to webinar via an emailed link.
- Set registrations to auto-approve.
- Allow only the host and co-host to share screen, not panelists.
- Set Q&A to be viewable only by host/co-host.
- Set panelists' microphones to be muted upon entry. (They may unmute after entry or wait for host to unmute.)
- Using panelists' video for webinars is a local decision but divisions should consider at minimum having videos turned on briefly during roll call to verify identity of school board member.
- NOTE: All participants video and microphones are automatically muted in Zoom Webinar. (They are not able to unmute; only host may unmute.)
- Approve both telephone and computer audio for meetings and webinars.
- Enable practice session.
- Record the webinar automatically (stored on local computer or in the cloud).
- Assign alternative hosts to board clerk and superintendent email/accounts as backup for webinar hosting and screen sharing. (This is a setting that needs to be enabled or can be done at the beginning of the meeting. The host can elevate any panelist to co-host.)

### **Additional Zoom Tutorials for Webinar Settings** **[Scheduling a Zoom Webinar with Registration](#)**

To enable and use a webinar practice session: **[Webinar Practice Session](#)**

### ***Recommended Zoom Settings when using Zoom Meetings***

The following are settings that are recommended for using Zoom Meetings. Divisions may use different settings if using Zoom for a staff meeting or purposes other than a public meeting of the school board.

- Require registration (if recurring, for each occurrence) for access to meeting via an emailed link.
- Set registrations to auto-approve.
- Disable "Join Before Host" and enable "Waiting Room."
- Disable "File Transfer."
- Disable "Allow Removed Participants to Rejoin."
- Allow only the host and co-host to share screen.
- Set chat to be viewable only by host/co-host.
- Set participants' microphones to be muted upon entry.
- Set video for participants to be off upon entry.
- Approve both telephone and computer audio for meetings and webinars.
- Schedule a practice meeting before public school board meeting.
- Record the meeting automatically (stored on local computer or in the cloud).
- Assign co-hosts to board clerk and/or superintendent as backup for meeting hosting and screen sharing.

## Additional Zoom Tutorials for Meeting Settings—[Scheduling a Zoom Meeting](#)

To understand the Zoom host and co-host administrative controls during a meeting, refer to this Zoom tutorial: [Host and Co-Host Controls in a Meeting](#)

To understand how to share files during meetings using Zoom platform, refer to this Zoom tutorial: [In-Meeting File Transfer](#)

To create a waiting room for meeting session (not available for webinars), refer to this Zoom tutorial: [Waiting Room](#)

### ***Distribute Devices, Train Team***

If the school division is providing devices, the IT team should have the Zoom app/shortcut and an email app/shortcut easily accessible. Ideally, support in setting up a Zoom account and profile should be provided for each school board member and division staff who will join the digital board meeting or other meetings the division may hold using Zoom.

**Support for setting up Zoom desktop app, desktop client, web client or mobile app can be found on the following Zoom tutorial page: [Getting Started.](#)**

The division leadership team — board leadership, superintendent, IT staff—should determine what type of training will be possible with staff and school board members who may be using the Zoom platform and/ or the school division device for the first time. If the division can't provide devices to school board members, training will need to be more individualized as school board members will be using personal devices to join a meeting and potentially create their own Zoom account. During training (which could simply be a conversation), ensure that each participant's device has both a working speaker and microphone, at the very least, or determine if a headset or other hardware may be needed. If using a tablet, determine if use of a stylus will be needed to provide better accessibility.

Part of the training should be to ask each member of the team to join a meeting and webinar to use the features in each successfully. Division leadership should be trained on how to access files and division materials necessary for the board deliberation and actions at the meeting. Ensure that everyone is able to access BoardDocs or that everyone has school division-provided email accounts to send PDF files, the board meeting agenda, and other documents referenced during the school board meeting. These trainings should be on the device and on the internet network that the school board member or staff would be using when accessing a digital board meeting so that potential issues are identified early and solved before the public meeting.

To determine if internet speed or connection may be challenging, the web tool [speedtest.net](http://speedtest.net) can be used to communicate potential issues to division IT staff. If connection speeds are limited for any member of the board, consider using audio only for that member's connection.

### ***Publish, Post, Notify***

For clarity, the following should be added to the usual required meeting notice:

- The virtual connection (Zoom link) and/or livestreaming information — this should be placed where you would normally place the location of the meeting in the advertisement.
- Provide suggestions for accessing public internet (if available) in the community, such as library or school division access in parking lots.
- Explanation of public comment process for your digital meeting.
- The published newspaper notice could simply state that the meeting will be conducted in virtual mode via Zoom, include the link for the meeting as location and direct people to visit the school division website for additional connection information and details.

# Step 3: TEST

In Zoom’s webinar settings, the administrator of the account can “[Enable Practice Webinar](#)” which allows the Zoom host and panelists to practice the logistics of the webinar before broadcasting to the public who have registered as participants. This test webinar should be used to ensure the following are functioning appropriately:

- Individual sound settings — all panelists/hosts can hear and be heard by all other panelists/hosts
- Video settings (if being used). Those with videos turned on need to recognize that facial expressions, gaze and background will be viewed by all who participate in the meeting.
- Lighting should be in front of them not behind to see their face.
- Background movement should be kept at a minimum to decrease distraction.
- Camera should be aimed at their face, not ceiling or an inanimate object.
- Share Screen setting (if being used). All panelists can see the material being shared clearly.
- Technology troubleshooting — all panelists should test contact through the provided number of the Zoom host or IT staff by calling or texting.
- Zoom host should demonstrate how to mute/unmute and change the view from Speaker to Gallery.
- Zoom host can elevate any panelist to co-host or turn over host duties to another.
- Board clerk reviews roll call, voting procedures, and reminds school board members to state full name when making or seconding a motion.

Participants should be instructed at the beginning that discussion must be limited to testing the platform and technology setup, and that no discussion of agency business is permitted. Every individual should join the meeting from his/her own device to be clearly heard and, if using video function, clearly seen. If multiple members of the district administration or staff are on-site for the meeting, they should join the webinar/meeting from separate rooms. Joining a Zoom meeting from two devices while located in proximity will cause audio feedback. If joining from the same room is necessary, one individual will always need to stay muted.

It may be wise to assign someone the participant role in order to test the settings and functions of the webinar from the perspective of a registered attendee who may submit public comment using the Raise Hand or Q&A features of the webinar (or the chat box of the meeting).

To minimize disruption to the meeting due to a technology glitch, multiple individuals (usually alterative and co-hosts) should have digital copies of materials being shared in the meeting. If one person has trouble sharing materials during the meeting, others could share from their devices. Materials should also be saved locally rather than shared from a cloud drive if possible — this is especially true if the material is a video or large multimedia file like PowerPoint. During the test, the host and each alternative host should test their ability to screen share and access the documents for the meeting.

# Step 4: LAUNCH

## **Welcome & Expectations**

If using Zoom Webinar, the host may start early, which allows participants and panelists to join but stay muted until the official start time. If using Zoom Meeting, a waiting room can be enabled to hold those who arrive early until the host officially starts the meeting. Whoever opens the meeting should set some expectations for all attendees by touching on the following:

- Identify the digital platform. “You are joining a Zoom webinar.”
- Reiterate the public comment policy; explain how the public identifies and provides public comment via the Zoom platform.
- Explain Chat Box, Raise Hand and Q & A features (if enabled). Explain that questions and chat comments are not visible to anyone other than the host.
- Explain the role of Zoom host to mute/unmute, identify and lower raised hands, and troubleshoot technical issues.
- Announce that the meeting is being recorded (and, if applicable, livestreamed through another platform).
- Share where the public was provided access to the meeting agenda. The Zoom host can also share their screen with the agenda.

## **Agenda**

When the board chair has called the meeting to order, the board clerk should take roll call with each board member stating verbally their attendance to comply with board policy and ensure accurate recording of minutes. School board members should repeat their full name throughout the meeting when making or seconding motions and voting for the same reasons.

Following the roll call and verification that a quorum is participating, conducting the pledge of allegiance by posting a picture of a flag to either the digital agenda, or by the Zoom host sharing screen of a flag image is recommended. By using such opportunities to replicate what happens at normal in-person board meetings, the board can lend a sense of decorum and normalcy to a new and potentially awkward situation.

## **Public Comment**

Prior to receiving public comment the board chair should verbally review the board’s rules regarding public comment during a digital meeting just as should happen in an in-person board meeting. Using the tools Zoom offers in both meeting and webinar formats, an individual should indicate a desire to submit for public comment. The Zoom host can acknowledge this individual, unmute him/her, and begin timing his/her public comment.

As always, the board can reserve the right to limit the public comment period to a certain overall time as well as limiting individual public comment time, pursuant to local policy.

Some additional considerations and recommendations for public comment:

- Public comment is not a question period directed to the board, but rather a time for the public to submit comments to the board. In the new digital environment, the Q&A feature may cause individuals to submit questions, expecting a response from the board during a board meeting, which is not the purpose of public comment. Therefore, the setting of expectations and reminder of the board policy on public comment are important.
- The Raise Hand feature as part of the Zoom Webinar is a feature for the public to be acknowledged for comment.
- Boards should consult with their school board attorney before admitting public comment via written statement (email, chat, etc.) to be read.
- Video functionality may or may not be available for public comment depending on whether the Zoom Meeting or Zoom Webinar option was chosen for the digital board meeting. The public should be made aware of this limitation prior to public comment.

# Accessibility Considerations & Options

## **Visual Impairment**

Zoom is supported by screen reader technology; however, some screen readers may have difficulty recognizing the prompts on the participant interface and users may need some assistance in navigating. It is important that your meeting/webinar materials are also optimized for this technology.

Share any documents and/or presentations that you will be referencing in the meeting/webinar in a screen-readable/modifiable format. PDF files should be created in an accessible format ([see Adobe PDF Accessibility](#)).

Be sure that all images used have alt text (alternative text), which is simply a description of the image that is read aloud by a screen reader. It's best to think of this description as the way you would describe the image if you are telling someone about it over the phone.

Regardless of the materials you are sharing, proper formatting is crucial to ensure that the end user can adapt them as needed. For more information on making your materials accessible, you can check out the [World Wide Web Consortium \(W3C\) Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\)](#).

## **Audio Impairment**

Zoom has several features to help ensure hearing-impaired audience members can participate in the meeting/webinar.

If there is a need to accommodate for live closed captioning, Zoom has the capability to have an assigned host/co-host/panelist (or an attendee in a meeting) to type those captions. For more information, check out [Getting Started with Closed Captioning](#). You will need to ensure the individual assigned to perform this task has adequate skills.

Even if there is no immediate request, you should still have a transcription of the meeting/webinar for those who may watch it at a later time. Zoom automatically transcribes your meetings/webinars (recorded to your Zoom cloud). These are then synchronized to the video recording, allowing the text to be searchable for specific topics in the recording. It would be advisable to review these auto-transcriptions for mistakes. For more information on how to activate this function, please visit, [Automatically Transcribe Cloud Recordings](#).

If you are livestreaming your meeting/webinar on another platform, you can find out more information on [YouTube's closed captioning here](#), or [Facebook's closed captioning here](#). If you typically provide sign language interpretation at your physical school board meeting as an accommodation for individuals who have made that request, you need to provide that accommodation in the virtual meeting as well and ensure you have video capability to display the individual performing the sign interpretation.

## **Physical/Mobility Impairment**

Zoom has shortcuts and hot keys for those who may have limited mobility. For more information, visit [Hot keys and Keyboard Shortcuts for Zoom](#). Standard tab and arrow keys work well to navigate the Zoom participant interface.

# Appendix A: Personal Checklist for Webinar/Meeting Test

## CONNECT YOUR EQUIPMENT

- Headset with microphone
- Webcam/phone camera

We recommend using a headset microphone (included with many phones). This will eliminate feedback issues and minimize background noise.

## TEST YOUR COMPUTER/TABLET/PHONE

Test your device to ensure that Zoom will run properly. Click [here](#) to join a test meeting. After clicking the join meeting link, a prompt to download and run Zoom will appear. Open the downloaded zip file and follow the prompts. Alternatively, download the Zoom app for mobile, desktop, or browser prior to joining the test meeting.

## TEST YOUR EQUIPMENT

- Turn your webcam on and off
- Check your microphone
- Mute and unmute your microphone

For any audio or video issues, follow the instructions in this [Zoom Audio/Video Tutorial](#).

## TEST ZOOM'S HOSTING FUNCTIONS (For host/co-hosts ONLY)

- Test sharing your screen. For more information: [Zoom's tutorial on screensharing here](#).
- Familiarize yourself with [muting and unmuting microphones](#).

Visit Zoom's comprehensive overview of [hosting and co-hosting controls page](#). For a complete list of Zoom tutorials, please visit the [Zoom Help Center](#).

## SHARE CONTACT INFORMATION

- Text or call the number provided from your division as the technology support (may be Zoom host)
- Share your number with technology support person for Zoom (may be Zoom host)

Having an alternative communication channel to access during the live meeting is important if technology glitches or challenges arise.

## CHOOSE LOCATION

- Choose a location where you can control sound and movement (as much as possible)
- Choose a location that offers adequate lighting if enabling the video function

Sounds that can register as background noise (heating, AC, foot-traffic, etc.) in the physical environment can become very noticeable and distracting in an online setting. Movement in the background of a video can also become distracting. This can be mitigated by [enabling virtual backgrounds](#). Check with your Zoom host and school division staff about this option.

# Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions

## ***Webinar vs. Meeting***

### **What is the difference between a Zoom Webinar and a Zoom Meeting?**

To see a full comparison of features, visit the following Zoom resource: [Meetings vs. Webinars](#). The Zoom Webinar format allows for school board members and division staff to be designated as “panelists” which offers more control in participating in the meeting than those in the public audience who are designated as “participants.” Participants can only participate in the webinar meeting when granted access by the Zoom host.

### **Can Zoom Webinars and Meetings both be recorded?**

Yes, both webinars and meetings can be recorded in Zoom.

### **What is the purpose of recording a digital school board meeting?**

Recording digital school board meetings is not required by law, but doing so can have some advantages. First, it can help the board secretary in preparing minutes. It also can provide a way to further ensure meetings are more accessible for persons with disabilities, such as by allowing for more accurate closed captioning. Since members of the public also can record meetings and post those recordings online, it can also provide an “official” version that can be referenced against edited or manipulated versions.

## ***Zoom Webinar and Meeting Roles (Host, Co-host, Panelist, Attendee)***

### **What is the difference between the role designations within a webinar or meeting?**

- The host of the webinar is the user who the webinar is scheduled under. He/She has full permissions to manage the webinar, panelists, and attendees. There can only be one host of a webinar. The host can do things like stop and start the webinar, mute panelists, stop panelists’ video, remove attendees from the webinar, and more.
- Co-hosts share many of the controls that hosts have, allowing the co-host to manage the administrative side of the webinar, such as managing attendees or starting/stopping the recording. The host must assign a co-host. Co-hosts cannot start a webinar. If a host needs someone else to be able to start the webinar, he/she can assign an alternative host.
- Panelists are full participants in a webinar. They can view and send video, screen share, annotate, etc. You must be assigned panelist permissions by the webinar host. The host can also disable some features for panelists, including starting video, sharing your screen, and recording.
- Attendees are view-only participants who can be unmuted if the host chooses. Their view of the webinar is controlled by the host. They can interact with the host and the panelists through the Q&A and the chat.

## **Public Comments**

### **How should public comment be handled during digital school board meetings?**

Prior to receiving public comment, the board chair should verbally review the board's rules regarding public comment during a digital meeting just as should happen in a normal, in-person board meeting.

### **Can an individual indicate that he/she would like to submit for a public comment?**

Yes. Using the tools Zoom offers in both meeting and webinar formats, an individual should indicate a desire to submit for public comment. The Zoom host can acknowledge this individual, unmute them, and begin timing the public comment. Using the "Raise Hand" feature as part of the Zoom Webinar is an option for the public to be acknowledged for comment.

### **Can the board reserve the right to limit public comment in a digital school board meeting?**

Yes, the board can reserve the right to limit the public comment period to a certain overall time as well as limiting individual public comment time based on local board policy.

### **Can public comment be submitted via a written statement (email, chat, etc.)?**

Boards should consult with their attorney before admitting public comment via written statement (email, chat, etc.) to be read. Boards are unlikely to permit written public comment when meetings are not held virtually, except perhaps as a disability accommodation, and should consider how otherwise allowing this in a normal setting could have undesirable manifestations.

### **Does video functionality have to be used for public comment in digital school board meetings?**

Video functionality may or may not be available for public comment depending on whether the Zoom Meeting or Zoom Webinar option was chosen for the digital board meeting. The public should be made aware of this limitation prior to public comment.

### **How does someone who calls in to a digital board meeting indicate he/she would like to submit a public comment?**

If the individual is not using the Zoom app and is only using phone audio, he/she may not have a way to indicate. This will have to be a local decision regarding whether the board wants to facilitate a different route in this situation.

### **If questions or comments are submitted to the host of a meeting, do all questions that were submitted have to be addressed during the meeting?**

Every question or comment that is submitted should be treated consistently. For example, the chair should respond by thanking every person who submitted a question and telling them that the superintendent will be back in touch with them, just as is done in a face-to-face meeting.

## **Closed Session**

### **Can school boards enter a closed session during a digital school board meeting? If so, how?**

Boards legally may pause a public meeting to commence a closed session at any time, so long as the reason is properly announced, just as with an in-person meeting. How the closed session is conducted will depend on the electronic meeting platform being used.

### **Can school boards use breakout rooms for closed session?**

It is not yet clear whether the use of the “Breakout Room” function of Zoom or similar features of other platforms is sufficiently secure to ensure the confidentiality of closed discussions. It is recommended that a separate Zoom Meeting, which only board members and other needed participants can access be used for this purpose.

### **How should school boards address the confidentiality of closed session in a digital environment? For example, how do we know that a board member doesn't have someone listening in at their remote location?**

This concern should not stop a board from holding a virtual closed session when necessary, absent particular security concerns. There is no effective way to ensure that when someone is participating electronically in a meeting there is not someone at the remote location also listening in, just as there is no way to ensure that a board member attending a normal closed session in person does not divulge what was discussed to others. It is recommended that each participant be asked whether anyone else is able to hear the discussion, but beyond that there is little else that can be done. Also, it should be taken into account that virtual meetings are subject to the same internet security vulnerabilities as any other online activity.

### **Additional Zoom Tutorials for Launching Digital School Board Meetings**

Webinar: To see how an attendee joins a webinar, visit the following Zoom tutorial: [Joining and Participating in a Webinar as an Attendee](#)

Webinar: For the Zoom host to understand how to manage participants in a webinar, visit the following Zoom tutorial: [Managing Participants in a Webinar](#)

Meeting: To start the meeting as the host, visit the following Zoom tutorial: [How do I Start or Join...?](#)

Meeting: To support training of participants joining a meeting, visit the following Zoom tutorial: [Joining a Meeting](#)