

ELECTRONIC MEETINGS AND PARTICIPATION BE MEMBERS POLICY
Council Policy No. 96/03

COMMUNITY CHARTER

Section 128, **Electronic meetings and participation by members**, of the *Community Charter*, states:

- (1) *If this is authorized by procedure bylaw and requirements of subsection (2) are met,*
 - (a) *a special council meeting may be conducted by means of electronic or other communication facilities, or*
 - (b) *a member of council or a council committee who is unable to attend at a council meeting or a council committee meeting, as applicable, may participate in the meeting by means of electronic or other communication facilities.*

- (2) *The following rules apply in relation to a meeting referred to in subsection (1):*
 - (a) *the meeting must be conducted in accordance with the applicable procedure bylaw;*
 - (b) *the facilities must enable the meeting's participants to hear, or watch and hear, each other;*
 - (c) *for a special council meeting referred to in subsection (1) (a),*
 - (i) *the notice under section 127 (2) [notice of special meetings] must include notice of the way in which the meeting is to be conducted and the place where the public may attend to hear the proceedings that are open to the public, and*
 - (ii) *except for any part of the meeting that is closed to the public, the facilities must enable the public to hear, or watch and hear, the meeting at the specified place, and a designated municipal officer must be in attendance at the specified place;*
 - (d) *for a meeting referred to in subsection (1) (b), except for any part of the meeting that is closed to the public, the facilities must enable the public to hear or watch and hear, the participation of the member.*

- (3) *Members of council or a council committee who are participating under this section in a meeting conducted in accordance with this section are deemed to be present at the meeting.*

INTENT

The intent behind the provision is to provide flexibility to council in conducting business, without compromising the rights of the public to have access to the decision-making process. The legislation does this by setting standards which require a municipality to:

- include the process for electronic meetings in the municipal procedure bylaw;
- to provide notice of electronic meetings; and
- to provide the appropriate facilities and equipment to give the public the opportunity to hear, or hear and see, the participation of council members.

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PRINCIPLES

1. In general, the City of Fort St. John
 - a. will conduct their business during regularly-scheduled meetings,
 - b. will hold electronic meetings in those instances where time is of the essence and a quorum of council members would not otherwise be available to physically attend a meeting at City Hall.
2. A member of council may participate in a regular, closed, special council meeting or council committee meeting in instances where the individual's participation is deemed important to the decision making process.

CONDUCTING SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETINGS ELECTRONICALLY

1. An electronic special council meeting may be considered when Council deems that:
 - a. time is of the essence,
 - b. there is a key matter to consider.
2. The decision to designate a special council meeting as an electronic meeting shall be left to the discretion of the mayor, acting mayor in the absence of the mayor, the chair of a committee. Alternately, council may resolve to hold an electronic council meeting.

ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION BY A COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE MEMBER

1. A member of council may participate in a regular, closed, special or committee meeting or portion of the meeting when it is deemed that the individual's attendance is deemed critical by either the mayor or the member of council affected.
2. A member of council may only participate electronically in a regular, closed, special or committee meeting at such times that the member of council is unable to be present at City Hall for reasons pertaining to absence from the municipality or health reasons.
3. The mayor, acting mayor or a designate of council must be in attendance at the meeting location identified in the public notice of the electronic meeting.
4. A minimum of one member of council must be present in the designated meeting location identified in the public notice of the electronic meeting.
5. The Corporate Officer or the officer's deputy or any person designated by the council to act in that officer's place must be present in the designated meeting place at City Hall for the duration of any electronic meeting.

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ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION BY A COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE MEMBER (continued)

6. With the exception of the participation in an electronic special council meeting, a member of council may not participate electronically in more than four (4) regular, closed or committee meetings in a twelve month period beginning January 1 and ending December 31 of each year. The restriction may be waived with the unanimous approval by council resolution in such instances that council deems the individual's participation to be critical to the decision making process.
7. A member of council may be allowed to join a meeting after the meeting has been called to order.
8. Whenever possible, a member of council will be provided with an agenda package in electronic or hard copy.
9. After the notice for an electronic meeting has been posted, the agenda may not be amended unless there is a minimum of 24 hours to post an amended notice.

LOGISTICS

1. The minimum permitted electronic means will be audio.
2. Cell phone and satellite connections may be used for open council meetings or council committee meetings. A land line must be used for closed council meetings or closed committee meetings.
3. If communication is lost to one or more electronic participants during a meeting:
 - a. a 10 minute recess will be called to try and reestablish the link(s),
 - b. if after the recess a link cannot be reestablished the member of council(s) affected will be deemed to have left the meeting,
 - c. if after the recess a link cannot be reestablished and there is not a quorum of members of council, the Corporate Officer will deem the meeting to be adjourned.

COSTS

1. The cost of a member of council participation in an electronic meeting shall be borne by the City of Fort St. John.
2. A member of council participating in an electronic meeting shall not be eligible for the per diem costs for attending the electronic meeting.

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NOTICE

1. The notice of the electronic special meeting shall be in the following format:

<p style="text-align: center;">City of Fort St. John NOTICE OF ELECTRONIC MEETING (Topic)</p> <p>Notice is hereby given that the Municipal Council of the City of Fort St. John will hold a special electronic meeting to consider a resolution which (description).</p> <p>As a result of a number of municipal council members being away from the City of Fort St. John and not being personally available to be in attendance at the meeting, their participation will be facilitated by means of a telephone conference call which will occur at the meeting to be held on (day, date, at time), in City Hall (meeting room) at 10631 – 100th Street, Fort St. John, British Columbia.</p> <p>Members of the public who wish to participate in the meeting may attend at City Hall at the time noted above. An opportunity will be given to persons deeming their interest affected by the resolution to listen to and provide input to all councillors, including those participating by teleconference before a vote is taken on the proposed resolution. Members of the public who wish to listen to the electronic council meeting may do so at City Hall.</p> <p>For further information on the meeting and background reports may be obtained at City Hall.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Name Director of Corporate Administration</p>
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