

Town of New Canaan Electronic Meeting Policy

Background

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR) (11th ed.), pp.81-82 defines a meeting as "a single official gathering of its members in one room or area to transact business for a length of time during which there is no cessation of proceedings and the members do not separate, unless for a short recess."

Robert's Rules also defines and permits electronic meetings as explained at RONR pp.97-99. An electronic meeting is defined in that section as "a meeting at which, rather than all participating members being physically present in one room or area as in traditional (or "face-to-face") meetings, some or all of them communicate with the others through electronic means such as the Internet or by telephone."

Policy

It is the policy of the Town that meetings of appointed Town Bodies (Commissions, Boards, Committees, etc.) should preferably be held in person because in-person meetings provide a better environment for undistracted analysis and decision-making, the ability to read body language and facial expressions and enhanced social interaction among members.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, there may be instances where members are not able to be physically present at a meeting. Accordingly, appointed Town Bodies may allow one or more members to participate by telephone or other appropriate electronic means, if:

1. The Town Body agrees (with a two-thirds majority) to allow ongoing electronic participation at its meetings.
2. A quorum of members is physically present at the meeting location, except in an emergency. An emergency is defined as a situation where immediate action is deemed to be imperative by the chairman or presiding officer of the Town Body.
3. Physical attendance for a member is not reasonably practical. The reason must be stated in the meeting minutes.
4. All members can simultaneously and clearly hear and speak with each other and all required hand-out materials are available to all participating members.
5. All parts of the meeting are audible or otherwise discernible to the public at the meeting location.

An appointed Town Body with alternate members should conduct all of its meetings in person.

Elected Town bodies may set their own policy concerning meetings and electronic participation

Approved by Board of Selectmen at its meeting on December 16, 2014.