



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

STAFF REPORT

April 6, 2022

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Michele Gardner, Town Clerk

SUBJECT: Discuss Format for Town Public Meetings Beginning in the Month of May, and Provide Direction to Staff

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss/consider the meeting format for Town public meetings beginning in the month of May and provide direction to staff.

DISCUSSION

Currently, all Town public meetings are being held virtually. However, as the world slowly returns to a new normal in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many councils are discussing a return to meeting in person, some with continued virtual options for participation and some with safety protocols.

Staff is requesting direction on the Council's preferred meeting format, at least for the month of May. Following is a list of options for the Council's discussion.

1. Continue the current virtual-only meeting format.
2. Use a hybrid format where the Council is in-person and members of the public participate virtually.
3. Use a hybrid format where the Council is in-person, and the public has the option to participate in person or by virtual means.
4. Use an in-person only meeting format, with no virtual option for the public.

If the Council chooses either of the first 2 options, it must determine by majority vote that, during the declared state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, state and local officials continue to recommend measures to promote social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and that continuation of virtual meetings will allow for full participation by members of the public until social distancing recommendations are no longer necessary.

Options 3 and 4 would not require the Council make those determinations. The normal Brown Act teleconferencing rules would apply. This means that if a Councilmember wished to participate remotely, they would need to post the agenda outside of the location from where they would be attending the meeting and allow the public to join them during the meeting time. This location includes but is not limited to a residence, a hospital room, hotel room or family home, even if the location is outside of Town limits. This location would have to be printed on the agenda that is posted 72 hours before the meeting. Also, a majority of the Council would have to be present in the jurisdiction in order to conduct the meeting.

Please note that Options 2 and 3 (hybrid format) are available to the Town Council and Planning Commission only. All other boards, commissions, and committees of the Town will not have a hybrid option. Thus, if the Council selects one of the hybrid options for itself and the Planning Commission, the other Town bodies would use Option 4, all in-person meeting format.

Finally, please note that the staff resources to enforce restrictions are limited. If the Council determines restrictions are necessary, then staff recommends Option 1, continuing to meet virtually.

Other Marin Municipalities

Mill Valley returned to in-person only meetings in July 2021. Sausalito and Tiburon have not set dates for returning in person. Corte Madera, Larkspur, Novato, and San Rafael are planning to return to their Council Chambers in April, and plan to follow state guidelines for indoor settings. San Anselmo is planning to start Option 3 hybrid meeting in mid-April, with the Council in-person and the public participating either in person or virtually.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ATTACHMENT

None.