



## **Policy: Electronic Meeting Operation Procedures**

### **Policy Statement:**

To establish rules and procedures governing the process for participating and conducting Council and its Committees Meetings in electronic format.

### **Purpose/Objective**

The Policy applies to all Council and its Committee meetings, both open and closed sessions, where an element of electronic participation is present which creates a hybrid meeting format. The Policy is created to establish guidelines for electronic participation of meetings in accordance with *The Municipal Act*.

### **Policy Statement Details**

The City of Elliot Lake's Council Procedure By-Law, as amended, still applies to all meetings and must be followed in addition to this Policy.

This Policy is intended to work in conjunction with the Procedure By-Law and clarify additional procedures that are deployed in a hybrid meeting operation.

All Council and/or Committee Members that are participating in hybrid meetings have the same rights and responsibilities. Members participating off-site (virtually) shall count towards quorum of members, shall be able to vote, and shall be permitted to participate in any portion of a meeting which is closed to the public.

Attendees, including Delegates and those attending Statutory Public Hearings that register with the Clerk prior to the meeting will be permitted to attend through the established conference system.

It is recognized that technology is not perfect and electronic participants may experience technological issues.

### **Definitions**

**Clerk:** The City Clerk and/or designate.

**Conference System:** The system chosen by the Clerk for the purposes of joining meeting participants via electronic means.

**Delegate:** A person or persons attending to address Council or its Committees. This may also include those providing Presentations in accordance with the Procedure By-Law or those attending for Statutory Hearings.

**Electronic Meeting:** A meeting called and held in full or part via electronic means, including but not limited to audio teleconference, video conference, and may include in-person attendance.

**Electronic Participation/Participants:** Meeting attendance not in-person.

**Host Computer:** The Staff person and computer that has the scheduled start, stop of the meeting, and can share presentation or other materials as needed.

**Hybrid Meeting:** A type of in-person meeting operation that also includes virtual (off-site) attendance.

**Meeting Management Software:** The chosen technology to support meeting facilitation. This may include agenda, minutes and voting processes.

**Procedure By-Law:** City of Elliot Lake By-Law 16-06.

## **Related Policy Guidelines**

### **1.0 General**

#### **1.1 Technology**

The Clerk, based on available resources and the advice of the Director of IT Services, shall determine the Conference System method and technology to be used for an Electronic Meeting.

Virtual backgrounds, where permitted, shall be used in limited capacity. The Chair may request the virtual background be removed if they feel the background is distracting or if the use of backgrounds may be the cause of any technical concerns (i.e. bandwidth).

It is the responsibility of those choosing Electronic Participation to ensure there is nothing preventing their participation within the meeting or the internet conductivity required to join the Conference System effectively. Clerks staff will be available a minimum of 15 minutes before the start of the meeting to test technology and assist, where possible in conjunction with IT Services Support Staff, any connection issues that arise.

In the event of a connection or service interruption with a voting member participating electronically in the meeting, the Chair may recess the meeting for up to 10 minutes. After 10 minutes of no connection with the member, the meeting shall resume.

#### **1.2 Attendance, including Notice to Clerk**

Where Electronic Participation is chosen, notice is required to the Clerk no less than one business day before the meeting in order to facilitate participation, with exception for Delegations or persons attending a Statutory Public Meeting that register in accordance with the Procedure By-Law or attend as a representative at a Hearing. No notice being received, the in-person participation shall be the default.

Once notice is provided for Electronic Participation, a change to in-person cannot be facilitated unless supported by the Clerk.

The Chair of the Electronic Meeting shall, unless for Emergency or extenuating circumstance, attend at a designated meeting space supported by the Clerk.

Attendees on the Conference System shall be reserved to the Members of Council or Committee, as the case may be, Municipal Staff, and registered delegations or participants of a Statutory Hearing. All those wishing to view the meeting shall do so either by being present in-person or viewing broadcasted meetings on the City's Website or local cable channel. Where a meeting is not broadcasted but is open to the public, the Clerk may facilitate an invite to the Conference System.

The Clerk and/or delegate may remove any unauthorized person(s) joining the Conference System.

### **1.3 Quorum – Voting Members**

Voting Members shall be required to have their videos on for Electronic Participation in order to count towards quorum. Voting Members, unless for extenuating circumstances approved by the Chair, shall not participate via teleconference within a Hybrid Meeting.

### **1.4 Meeting Etiquette and Process**

The following guidelines apply to Hybrid Meetings:

- All microphones shall remain muted for the duration of the meeting except for the individual speaking.
- The Chair shall introduce each agenda item and, upon request, allow for Staff, Delegates, or other attendees to address Council or Committee where appropriate to do so.
- Presentations shall be displayed and controlled by the Host Computer.
- Members wishing to speak, shall raise their hand or utilize the speaking request (i.e. Raise Hand) function within the Conference System.
- Staff, Delegations, and other attendees shall keep their cameras / videos off except when acknowledged by the Chair.
- Electronic Participants are to be mindful that their video will be visible to the public and should review their background, lighting, camera angles and location with this in mind.
- Members should aim to attend the meeting in it's entirety as they would in chambers, limiting the amount of times they leave the meeting.
- Members must advise the chair/clerk of any leaves from the meeting so that it may be noted in the minutes.

### **1.5 Voting and Speaking Rights of Members**

Votes will be administered through the Meeting Management Software, where possible, and the results will be displayed by the Host Computer.

Where either the Meeting Management Software is not engaged or the vote is called by a show of hands from the Chair the following guidelines apply when a Hybrid Meeting is being conducted:

- In-person Council and Committee members to be recognized first for speaking, followed by virtual. The Chair will be required to maintain a list and monitor both types of participants;
- The votes of those attending in-person shall be confirmed first followed by Electronic Participants;
- If a Member participating virtually is called for their vote response and no response to indicate their vote is received, the Clerk will mark them absent for the vote.

## **2.0 Municipal Staff, Including Consultants retained by the City**

The CAO or Clerk, as appropriate, will make the decision on staff attendance location. Notice shall be provided to the Clerk in advance of the meeting the participation method.

## **3.0 Delegate Attendance**

Delegates will be able to have Electronic Participation by registering with the Clerk in accordance with the Procedure By-Law. Such Electronic Participation shall constitute an appearance before Council or Committee in accordance with the Procedure By-Law. The Clerk will facilitate the Conference System invitation where needed. During the delegation portion, the Chair will invite those registered to address Council and the Clerk shall facilitate the speaking opportunity along with any materials that were submitted in accordance with the Procedure By-Law.

Should the Delegate experience technical disruption, attempts will be made to either facilitate an alternative Electronic Participation. Where the attempts are unsuccessful, the meeting shall continue in absence of the Delegate.

## **4.0 Closed Session Meetings**

Where the possibility to have a Closed Meeting portion, will include the following guidelines:

- No virtual backgrounds are to be used;
- Those participating virtually are to ensure that no other person is in the room during the closed session portion.