



## Considerations Regarding “Virtual” Vestry Meetings

Jan. 21, 2022

### Background / Overview

In light of the continuing Covid-19 situation, and in particular the rise in cases as a result of the omicron variant, a number of Parishes have asked for confirmation that the authority to hold virtual vestry meetings will continue.

By way of background and as a reminder, general provisions relating to Vestry meetings are set out in Canon 9 of the Canons of the Diocese, [available here \(pages 37-44\)](#). Incorporated parishes must also follow their Bylaws.

On January 19, 2022, Diocesan Council passed a [Resolution](#) affirming permission for parishes to hold electronic or hybrid Annual Vestry meetings in 2022.

### Issues to Consider

There is no “one size fits all” approach, or best practice, in relation to “virtual” Vestry meetings. Parishes should consider and adopt what is most appropriate in their particular context, in order to ensure:

- **Appropriate notice** (both of the meeting, and to the extent possible, matters to be considered at the meeting). This may, for example, mean that more notice of the meeting than the minimum requirement set out in the Canons is given (*see Canon 9.7*), or that a Parish may choose to require any Vestry member wishing to bring forward a motion do so a certain amount of time in advance so that it, and any relevant amendments, can be considered prior to the meeting.
- **Ability of Vestry Members to participate at the meeting**, recognizing that in a virtual setting, greater structure than usual may be necessary (for example, asking that those who wish to speak on a motion indicate their desire to do so in advance; or keeping participants muted until their allocated time to speak).
- **Voting** can be conducted efficiently and accurately.

What makes sense for one Parish may not make sense for another. For example:

- If “Parish A” expects only 20 or so attendees, it may be practicable to convene the meeting as an ordinary videoconference using Zoom, Google Meetup, MS Teams or similar, to accept motions “from the floor”, to request that those wishing to speak raise their hands and wait to be called on, and to take votes via a simple show of hands.
- If “Parish B” expects 80 or 100 attendees, it may be necessary (as examples only): (i) to require advance registration; (ii) to ask that proposed resolutions be submitted ahead of the meeting in order that they may be circulated with a view to soliciting (and potentially resolving) any objections or proposed amendments ahead of the meeting; and (iii) to conduct voting either via the [polling function](#) available in Zoom and other platforms, or (especially if a motion is not likely to be controversial), to ask people to signify only negative votes and abstentions, making it clear that no response will be taken as a vote in favour.