

FACTORS TO ADDRESS FOR FUTURE IN-PERSON/REMOTE/HYBRID MEETINGS

May 6, 2021

Staff are investigating approaches to holding meetings of the County Board, standing committees, boards and commissions once county buildings reopen. There are 7 factors that need to be addressed.

1. Technology: This summer there will be construction work in both the chambers and in the third floor meeting rooms to upgrade AV technology. This work was included in the 2020 budget and has taken on more importance given the pandemic. The contract will come before the Board in June, and then work will commence. Once the upgrades are complete, we will need to have training and develop workable procedures. Additionally, DIM is working to determine how to upgrade technology in meeting rooms outside of the CCB.
2. Legal Issues: The County Board approved several ordinance amendments a year ago to allow remote meetings. Additional changes to ordinances may be necessary to allow hybrid meetings.
 - a. Wis. Stat. s. 19.81(3) provides that a public meeting must be “held in a place reasonably accessible to members of the public and open to all citizens at all times.” The AG opined that in light of the public health emergency virtual meetings satisfied this so long as the public had access. If the board meets in-person, obviously that public health concern may not be as compelling.
 - b. If the board is going to meet in person, it is likely the public must be allowed in. DCO s. 7.63(1)(b) talks about public testimony virtually “if the county board meets remotely.” So at the very least an amendment to board rules would be required.
3. Public Health: We will follow the guidance of PHMDC regarding when the building reopens, the number of individuals allowed in each room, and the use of masks. We will need to address approaches to individuals who will not wear masks or otherwise abide by public health requirements for meetings.
4. Procedures: Just as the County Board Office developed a handbook for how to hold meetings remotely, we will provide instructions for how to hold a hybrid meeting. There are more questions than answers at this juncture, but we are working on this.
5. Security: The Common Council, Municipal Court, and County Board all use the chambers. Pursuant to recent national and local concerns, a staff group has been considering approaches to security for the public, officials, and staff.
6. Outreach: Board members, committee staff, board and commission members, and the public have been asked about how they feel about in-person meetings.
7. Timeline: The preceding factors impact this. We will keep you posted.