

REMOTE PARTICPATION POLICY

This Springfield School Committee Remote Participation Policy "Policy" is adopted under the authority of the Open Meeting Law, MGLc 30A §20(d), and regulations promulgated by the Massachusetts Attorney General, 940 CMR 29.10.

The purpose of this Policy is to encourage ongoing participation in School Committee meetings, with the exception of School Committee Executive Sessions, by authorizing remote participation when, from time to time, a member finds that physical attendance would be unreasonably difficult. Further this Policy seeks to establish specific practices and procedures for member(s) remote participation in accordance with the Attorney General regulations.

The Springfield School Committee recognizes the inherent benefits of physical presence in a meeting. Therefore, the ability to participate remotely is not intended for the convenience of a member of the School Committee, nor to be used in a way that would defeat the purposes of the Open Meeting Law. Rather, this Policy is intended allow a member to actively participate in a meeting when the member's physical attendance is unreasonably difficult only under the following circumstances:

1. Family Illness
2. Personal disability
3. Emergency
4. Military service
5. Significant geographic distance

Remote participation is permissible only if physical attendance is unreasonably difficult due to one of the above 5 circumstances **and** predicated upon the following two conditions:

1. A quorum of the School Committee, including the chair or in the chair's absence, the vice chair must be physically present at the in person meeting. The member participating remotely may not be counted as part of the physical in person quorum in determining if a meeting may go forward with a remote participant.
2. The member participating remotely, the members physically present and those members of the public in attendance at the meeting, if recognized by the Chair, must be clearly audible, and if by video conferencing, clearly visible, to each other with continuity of communications.

Procedure:

Any School Committee member who wishes to participate remotely shall, as soon as reasonably possible prior to a meeting, notify the chair or, in the chair's absence, the vice chair, of his or her desire to do so and the reason for and facts supporting his or her request. Any determination by the person chairing the meeting to allow or not allow remote participation shall be final and shall not be appealable.

At the start of the meeting, the chair shall announce the name of the member who will be participating remotely and the method of remote participation. This information shall also be recorded in the meeting minutes.

All votes taken during the meeting in which a member participates remotely shall be by roll call vote.

A member who participates remotely may vote and shall not be deemed absent for the purposes of MGLc 39 §23D.

A member may not participate remotely in an Executive Session.

The chair, or in the chair's absence, the person chairing the meeting shall distribute to the remote participant in advance of the meeting, copies of any documents or exhibits that he or she reasonably anticipates will be used during the meeting.

At all times, members of the School Committee participating in person or remotely shall not use any form of electronic device to direct message any other member.

The chair may decide how to address technical difficulties that arise because of utilizing remote participation and shall suspend discussion while reasonable efforts are made to correct any problem that interferes with a remote participant's ability to hear or be heard clearly by all persons present at the meeting location. If technical difficulties result in a remote participant being disconnected from the meeting, that fact and the time at which the disconnection occurred shall be noted in the meeting minutes. The chair may then rule that the remotely participating member may not participate in the vote on said matter.