

# Guidance for Committee Chairs Hosting Work Sessions Utilizing the Zoom Meeting Platform

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Work sessions during the First Regular Session of 130th Legislature will be conducted electronically using the Zoom meeting platform. The goal is to ensure that electronic work sessions will function in a similar manner to in-person work sessions including providing access to the public, other legislators and interested parties. Included below are some tips and information to consider when conducting work sessions utilizing Zoom.

## Access to the Zoom meeting

In the Zoom meeting format, all participants require a Zoom link or invitation to access the electronic meeting.

- Committee members and staff will receive Zoom links or invitations for a work session from the committee clerk by email.
- Participants other than committee members and staff will also need the Zoom link or invitation for the meeting. Prior to the work session, committee chairs must work with their analyst/analysts and clerk to identify interested parties (sponsors, department staff, lobbyists and others) who will be asked to attend as participants.
- Public access to the work session will be provided via YouTube livestream. All committees now have their own YouTube channel. Audio access to work sessions will also be provided (through Legislature's traditional audio streaming). Links for YouTube and audio streaming access will be emailed to the interested parties list and be available on the committee's webpage.

## Hosting the Zoom meeting

The Zoom meeting is facilitated by a host or co-hosts who are assigned when the meeting is scheduled; hosts or co-hosts can also be assigned or re-assigned during a meeting.

- One or both chairs will act as host for the meeting. There may be times when the clerk (and if absolutely necessary, the analyst) is needed to help manage the electronic platform so it is expected that the clerk and analyst will also be designated as co-hosts for each work session.
- The host or co-host will permit attendees into the meeting using the "waiting room" feature in Zoom which serves as security measure for ensuring controlled access to work sessions.
- The host or co-host will also have the ability to:
  - Mute an attendee microphone and request a committee member or participant to unmute their mic; (a host or co-host cannot unmute someone). Hosts should be aware of participants who do not mute their microphone once done speaking and either mute them from the participants window or ask the person to mute themselves;
  - Enable and disable video;
  - Remove participants from the meeting and block them from re-entering (if necessary).
- The chat function for Zoom meetings will remain on to assist in management of the work session. Chairs should establish guidelines on how it is to be used to ensure transparency and proper decorum/control during a work session. The chat function should be used only with leave of the chair and for administrative purposes, for technical issues, or by staff to share links to important information, such as the committee materials webpage. Chairs should remind members that Zoom chat is not the place to have discussion or otherwise conduct committee business. Members of the public watching the work session on YouTube or listening to the work session over the Legislature's streaming service will not have access to information shared using the chat function.

## **Video and audio broadcast and recording**

Work sessions will be streamed live over the internet through YouTube and also recorded. Chairs and committee members should be aware that if their camera and microphone are on, whatever they say or do will be seen and heard. It may be helpful for hosts to provide this reminder at the start of any work session and before any breaks.

## **Recognizing a member wishing to speak during a work session**

In order to ensure that work sessions are held in a consistent and efficient manner, it will be important for committee chairs to decide the best way to recognize a committee member wishing to speak during a work session. Prior to the start of the work session, a specific committee member (this would traditionally be one of the committee chairs) should be tasked with keeping track of those members wishing to speak. Options for indicating a member wishes to speak include the following:

- The electronic raise hand function (under some Zoom accounts the raise hand function is available on the participant list, on other Zoom accounts it is available by clicking the reactions icon);
- The chat function;
- Allowing the member to visually raise their hand; or
- Allowing the member to indicate by voice that they wish to speak.

Whichever option is chosen, it should be the recognized method for the entire session and announced at the beginning of each meeting.

## **Delegating chairing duties to committee members in the absence of a chair**

Oftentimes, the demands of session mean that a chair may not be available during all or portions of a scheduled work session. Before the committee begins a meeting, it will be important for the chairs to determine the order in which members of the committee may be asked to assist in facilitating work sessions.

## **Document sharing in an electronic world**

Under normal circumstances, information is provided directly to committee members during a work session in paper format. Since work sessions will be held electronically, this is not an option. The Zoom platform includes an option to allow a participant to share their screen. Prior to meeting, committee chairs should decide who will be allowed to share their screen during a work session. Options for screen sharing include the following:

- Only allow screen sharing through the committee analyst (this may be the most efficient option and may also help guarantee that the information being shared is appropriate);
- Allow screen sharing for documents, other than those produced/provided by the analyst, through the committee clerk; or
- Allow any meeting participant to share their screen, with leave of the chair.

The committee chairs may also want to provide guidance on the format used for sharing documents or draft amendments. For example, visuals through the Zoom platform may be difficult to see, so requiring a certain sized font or font color may be necessary to ensure documents are readable. While the share screen option can be a useful tool, it does have some drawbacks. For example, when the share screen function is in use, not all committee members will be visible to the chairs. The chairs should consider any possible drawback when deciding how much screen sharing should occur during a work session.

There may be exceptions to any rule established by the chairs in advance of the meeting regarding screen sharing, but in general there should be consistency from meeting to meeting.

It will be important that any document shared using the share screen function during a work session must be made available to committee members and the public after the work session. Each legislative committee has a webpage, which includes a link to committee materials. Utilizing the committee materials webpage is likely the most effective way to share documents in an organized manner. However, committee chairs may prefer other options, such as email attachments. Committee chairs should decide before meeting how documents shared during a work session will be made accessible to members of the committee and the public.

## **Voting**

It is important for chairs to determine what process a committee will use for voting during a Zoom work session. In accordance with the Model Committee Rules of Procedure (COVID addendum), a vote by the committee must be taken in a manner that provides opportunity for members and those observing the meeting to either see or hear how each committee member present chooses to be recorded. A committee may take votes by roll call. If so, the chairs should determine whether one of the chairs or the clerk is responsible for calling the roll. A committee may also take votes by a visual show of hands. The clerk is responsible for recording the vote.

## **Committee caucuses and breaks**

It is expected that committees may want to take time for caucuses. A committee may also want to take a short break during meetings. When doing so, it is recommended that committee members and staff turn off their video and audio for that particular Zoom committee work session before taking a break or joining a caucus. Alternatively, committee members may leave the meeting and return after the break using the Zoom link.

## **Technical issues – who to contact**

During a work session using the Zoom meeting platform, technical issues are likely to arise from time to time. In order to make these meetings as seamless as possible, the committee clerk should be the first line of contact regarding technical issues. The committee clerk will be participating in work session remotely through Zoom. Some issues may be evident to all participants. In these instances, the committee clerk will be aware of the issue and may be able to address it as it arises, or will need to contact the Legislative Information Technology office for further assistance. If an individual member is experiencing a technical issue, that member should contact the committee clerk privately using the chat function or other pre-determined method. The committee clerk will either assist that member or contact the Legislative Information Technology if needed.

The committee analyst should not be relied upon during a work session to deal with any technical issues. The role of the analyst during a work session is to provide a nonpartisan summary of the legislative proposal before the committee, to answer questions relating to that proposal, to assist in the facilitation of discussions on that proposal, and to make note of suggested amendments to that proposal.