

REMOTE PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Sedgwick School district allows members of the Committee to participate in a public meeting of the Committee by remote methods in limited circumstances as provided in 1 MRSA §403-B.

For the purpose of this policy, “remote methods” means telephonic or video technology allowing simultaneous reception of information and may also include other means necessary to provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities. Remote participation by Committee members cannot be by text-only means such as email, text messages, or chat functions.

Members of the Committee are expected to be physically present for Committee meetings except when being physically present is not practicable.

Circumstances in which physical presence for public meetings is not practicable include:

1. The existence of an emergency or other issue that requires the Committee itself to meet by remote methods.

An emergency may be a State-declared emergency, where there has been a declaration of a state of emergency by the Governor that applies to the school unit, or a local emergency (e.g., adverse weather conditions) or urgent issue requiring Committee action.

The Committee Chair, in consultation with the Superintendent, will determine whether there is a local emergency or urgent issue that requires a remote meeting of the Committee.

2. Illness, or other physical condition, or temporary absence from the area governed by the Committee that causes a Committee member to face significant difficulties traveling to and attending in person at the designated physical location of the Committee meeting.

Prior notice of the Committee member’s absence and the reason for it, with indication that the Committee member plans to participate remotely, should be communicated to the Committee Chair as far in advance of the meeting as practicable.

As with in-person meetings (20-A MRSA §1002(20)), the opportunity for the public to comment at Committee meetings will be provided at remote public meetings through the use of video conferencing either by raising hands or through the chat function. For those without video conferencing access, written comments/questions may be submitted to the Superintendent’s office at least 24 hours in advance. Individuals with disabilities seeking a reasonable accommodation should contact the Committee Chair or Superintendent’s

office as far in advance of the Committee meeting as practicable, but at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

Members of the public participating in public meetings of the Committee are expected to comply with Committee policy 2.01P, Public Participation at School Committee meetings.

Notice of all Committee meetings in compliance with 1 MRSA § 406 and Committee Policy 2.01M. When the public may attend by remote methods, the notice will include the means by which members of the public may access the meeting using remote methods. The notice will also identify a location for members of the public to attend in person. Public attendance at a meeting will be limited solely to remote methods only if the conditions in subparagraph 1 above (emergency or urgent issue meetings) have been met.

A member of the Committee who participates remotely in a public meeting of the Committee is considered present for purposes of a quorum and voting.

All votes taken during a public meeting of the Committee using remote methods will be taken by roll call vote that can be seen and heard when using video technology, and heard when using only audio technology, by the other members of the Committee and the public.

The Committee will make all documents and other materials to be considered by the Committee available, electronically or otherwise, to members of the public who attend remotely to the same extent customarily available to members of the public who attend public meetings of the Committee in person, as long as additional costs are not incurred by the Committee.

Remote participation is not permitted for meetings where voters of the School Administrative Unit meet to vote as a legislative body, such as budget meetings.

Executive sessions held during remote meetings will not be accessible to the public. The public will be allowed to rejoin the meeting when the executive session has ended and the public meeting is back in session.

Legal Reference: 1 MRSA § 403-B, 406
20 MRSA §1001(20)

Cross Reference: 2.01 J – Executive Session
2.01 J – School Committee Meetings
2.01 M – Notification of School Committee Meetings
2.01 N – Agenda
2.01 H – Rules of Order

2.01 P – Public Participation at School Committee Meetings

2.01 Z – School Committee Member Compensation

11.02 – Public Concerns and Complaints