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Exploring Together: Navigating Hybrid Engagement

Shared practices, tools, and policies

November 17, 2021
Today’s Agenda

• Hybrid Initiative Introduction
• State Policy Updates
• Exploring Policy Themes
• Break-Out Discussion/Q&A
• What’s Next
Project Partners

Town of Dedham
Leon Goodwin
Town Manager
Town of Dedham, MA

Sarah MacDonald
Selectboard Member
Town of Dedham, MA

Amanda Smith
Public Information Officer
Town of Dedham, MA

Town of Randolph
Michelle Tyler
Planning Director
Town of Randolph, MA

City of Framingham
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Group Agreements

• Use “I” statements
• Take Space, Make Space
• Use accessible language
• Push past your comfort zone
• Accept and expect lack of closure
• Active Participation
Hybrid Initiative: June – December

- Project Kick-Off
  - 3 partners - Randolph, Framingham, Dedham

- Focus Groups
  - K-12 Teachers/ Universities
  - 9/22 4-5pm
  - Cable Access 9/7 1-2pm
  - 19 participants

- Workshop #1
  - Navigating Hybrid Engagement 8.18.21
  - 166 participants

- Workshop #2
  - Facilitation & Meeting Design 9.29.21
  - 97 participants

- Workshop #3
  - Technology 10.20.21
  - 106 participants

- Workshop #4
  - Policy 11.17.21
  - Framingham Community Development Block Grant Session
  - ARPA Roundtables
  - Dedham Master Plan
  - Hybrid Meetings

- Online Hybrid Engagement Toolkit

Participation:
- 166 participants
- 97 participants
- 19 participants

Hybrid Engagement

In-person Engagement

Virtual Engagement

Synchronous vs Asynchronous
State Policy Updates

Leah Robins  
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Lauren Goldberg  
KP Law  
Managing Attorney  
lrobins@mapc.org
Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of Open Meeting Law
Expires when State of Emergency is lifted

Law signed allowing town meeting to be delayed beyond 6/30/2020

Law signed including changes to Town Meeting
Expires when State of Emergency

State of Emergency is lifted in Massachusetts

Law is signed including changes to open meeting law (Expires April 1, 2022) and town meeting (December 15, 2021)
Open Meeting Law: Prior to COVID

Remote participation by members of a public body was permitted in certain circumstances

- Remote participation may be used if it has first been adopted by the chief executive officer of the municipality for local public bodies; also empowered to "opt out" of remote participation
- Local commissions on disability are able to permit remote participation even without adoption by the municipal adopting authority
- Once remote participation is adopted any member of the public body may participate remotely only if physical attendance would be unreasonably difficult

Minimum requirements

- Quorum of the body, including the chair or person chairing the meeting, must be physically present at the meeting location;
- Members of a public body who participate remotely and all persons present at the meeting location must be clearly audible to each other; and
- All votes taken during a meeting in which a member participates remotely must be by a roll call vote
Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Meetings of Public Bodies

• March 12, 2020: Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law
• In effect until State of Emergency is terminated
Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Town Meeting

- April 3, 2020 Law signed that enables Town Meeting to be delayed after June 30, 2020
- June 5, 2020 Law signed that enabled reduced quorum and ability to hold meeting outside of municipal borders
- Both in effect for duration of State of Emergency

Representative Town Meeting

- June 5, 2020 Law signed that established a process whereby a representative town meeting can be held remotely, including through the use of phone or video conferencing
- In effect for the duration of the State of Emergency
## After the State of Emergency

### Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 An Act Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meetings of Public Bodies</th>
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<td>• Extends, until April 1, 2022, remote meeting provisions of a previous executive order that enable meetings to be held remotely</td>
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<td>• Extends, until December 15, 2021, the ability for town meeting quorum to be reduced</td>
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<td>• Extends, <strong>until December 15, 2021</strong>, the ability for remote town meetings to be held in towns with representative town meeting form of government</td>
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Current Law Allowing Virtual Meetings

Until April 1, 2022 Meetings of Public Bodies are modified in three key ways

1. Continues "adequate, alternative means of public access" to the deliberations of the public body and, where real time participation by the public is a requirement of a general or special law, regulation or local ordinance or bylaw, participation with the body as well;

2. For reasons of economic hardship and despite best efforts enables alternate methods of compliance

3. Authorizes all members to participate remotely; the requirement for a quorum and the chair be physically present at the meeting location remains suspended;

4. All other provisions unchanged
The Open Meeting Law

Learn about the Open Meeting Law or report a violation with the Attorney General's Division of Open Government.
What next?
Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government

### Senate Members
- **Chair:** John J. Cronin
- **Vice Chair:** Diana DiZoglio

Edward J. Kennedy
Susan L. Moran
John C. Velis
Bruce E. Tarr (Ranking Minority)

### House Members
- **Chair:** Lori A. Ehrlich
- **Vice Chair:** Paul F. Tucker

Michelle M. DuBois
John Barrett, III
Christina A. Minicucci
Mike Connolly
Tami L. Gouveia
Tram T. Nguyen
Edward R. Philips
Mathew J. Muratore (Ranking Minority)
Norman J. Orrell

### Senate Contact
- **Address:** 24 Beacon St. Room 504, Boston, MA 02133
- **Phone:** (617) 722-1230

### House Contact
- **Address:** 24 Beacon St. Room 540, Boston, MA 02133
- **Phone:** (617) 722-2090
Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight
"P"olicies: What we have heard
Major Policy Themes

- Leverage current investments (American Rescue Plan Act/Infrastructure/Build Back Better)
- Updates to Open Meeting Law
- Equitable Practices
Major Policy Themes

Adopt Public Meetings Policy

If adopted:

• When should in-person meetings require virtual option?
• What meetings need to be in person?
Major Policy Themes

Build Staff Capacity

Hiring: Require New Skills
Major Policy Themes

- Make Technology Upgrades a Capital Expense
- Invest in Broadband Access/Get more people connected
- Community Trainings on Virtual Tools

- Consider doing a Digital Access & Equity Plan
- Have you heard of the Digital Navigators Program?
Break-Out Discussions

What is your reaction to these themes?
What are your practices currently?
What kinds of policies are you thinking of implementing?
Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Executive Order suspending certain provisions of Open Meeting Law

- "Adequate, alternative means of public access" to deliberations and, where required by law, regulation, ordinance or by-law, must also include option for participation by the public;
- Alternative option for reasons of economic hardship and despite best efforts (only for meetings that do not require active participation);
- Remote participation authorized for all members in any meeting; requirement that a quorum and chair be physically present at a meeting location is suspended;
- All other provisions of open meeting law unchanged