

# Meeting Guidance for Townships During Pa.'s Phased Reopening

This document provides direction for how townships should conduct public meetings safely during the phased reopening. **Township officials should ensure that meetings in all phases are transparent by allowing the public to attend remotely or in person and allow for public participation in person, remotely, or through written comments.**

**W**hat your public meeting will look like is ultimately a decision of the board of supervisors, as local governments are exempt from the stay-at-home and business closure orders but are strongly urged to follow both state and federal guidance to provide for public safety. In all phases, townships need to be flexible and should consider providing remote or alternative meeting options to ensure public safety until the commonwealth returns to a pre-COVID-19 normal.

**Red Phase:** Maximum attendance for large gatherings is 10. In-person meetings should be strictly limited. Townships should conduct remote meetings by teleconference or video.

**Yellow Phase:** Maximum attendance for large gatherings is 25. While in-person meetings of 25 or less may be held, state guidance continues to recommend remote meetings. Townships should consider options of teleconference, video-conference, or hybrid in-person/remote meetings.

**Green Phase:** Maximum attendance for large gatherings is 250. While in-person meetings may be held, state guidance continues to recommend remote meetings. Townships should consider a combination of in-person and remote or alternative options to fit their community needs.

## In-Person Meetings: Guidance for All Phases

- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet from other people. Set up meeting rooms to accommodate social distancing. Limit the number of people inside the meeting

room to no more than 50 percent of the total maximum occupancy. Consider measures to prevent large groups from entering or exiting the meeting room at the same time. Consider providing a separate entrance and exit and use tape to mark where to walk.

- Require the use of cloth facemasks. Consider making disposable masks available.
- Clean and disinfect meeting rooms before meetings using CDC guidance. Regularly clean high-contact surfaces. For meetings, reduce high contact with surfaces by leaving doors open, eliminating sign-ins, or having visitors use their own pens and reduce the number of people touching papers by placing agendas and meeting materials on chairs or placing individual packets on a table.
- Provide hand sanitizer or a handwashing station.
- Urge sick people to stay home. Providing alternative meeting options encourages both sick and health-compromised individuals to stay home.
- Communicate new procedures and expectations to residents through signage.

## Remote Meetings: Special Rules During the Statewide Emergency Declaration

Act 15 of 2020 clarifies that all municipalities, for the duration of a statewide emergency declaration, may conduct public meetings and hearings by teleconference or videoconference provided all board members can hear and comment, as well as providing for public participation to the maximum extent practicable.

Act 15 applies to all township boards and commissions, including townships that operate under a home rule charter. Act 15 clarifies that meetings held via teleconference or videoconference do not require a physical presence of a quorum at a meeting location. *(Note: Township supervisors could participate*

Townships should consider alternative meeting locations for all phases of reopening, even meeting outside if possible. Other options include remote meetings such as teleconferences or videoconferences, livestreaming meetings, and posting audio or video recordings.



in a remote meeting before Act 15 because there is no legal requirement for a quorum to be physically present under the Second Class Township Code.)

Advance notice of a meeting that will be held virtually must be posted on the township's website, if it has one, in a legal advertisement, or both. Public notice must include the date, time, technology to be used, and public participation information. To the extent possible, teleconference or videoconference or allowing written comments submitted to a designated email address or by U.S. mail are all options. A combination of more than one method is preferred.

In addition, minutes from an emergency meeting related to the COVID-19 emergency, which does not require a public notice, must be made available within 20 days of the meeting.

### Alternative Meeting Options

Township officials should consider alternative meeting options for all phases. These include:

- Remote meetings, including teleconferences (*landline or cell*) or videoconferences.
- Livestreaming meetings or recording and posting an audio or video recording.
- Having one or more board members call in and participate remotely in a live meeting.
- Holding meetings outside, in the parking lot, drive-in style, or in a pavilion, or in a different location, such as a garage, that allows for social distancing.
- Posting agendas in advance and providing for pre-meeting submission of comments by email or mail or allowing residents to call in during the meeting.



If your township is conducting videoconference meetings, such as through Zoom, be sure to hold such meetings safely and follow the FBI suggestions in column two on this page.

- Posting meeting minutes or a meeting summary within a few days of the meeting.

### Securing Remote Videoconferencing Meetings

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has provided guidance for safely holding remote meetings:

- Require a different password for each meeting.
- Do not share a link to the meeting or the required password on social media. Instead, direct residents to contact the township directly for the link and password.
- Restrict screensharing options to the host only.
- Ensure that participants are using the updated version of these applications.
- Update your township's telework policy to address physical/info security requirements.

### Additional Resources

- **State Guidance for Businesses Permitted to Operate During the COVID-19 Disaster Emergency to Ensure the Safety and Health of Employees and the Public** — [www.governor.pa.gov/covid-19/business-guidance/](http://www.governor.pa.gov/covid-19/business-guidance/)
- **CDC/EPA Cleaning & Disinfecting Guidance** — [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html)
- **Office of Open Records Guidance on the Sunshine Act and the Coronavirus** — [openrecordspennsylvania.com/2020/03/11/the-sunshine-act-and-covid-19/](http://openrecordspennsylvania.com/2020/03/11/the-sunshine-act-and-covid-19/)
- **Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association Guidance** — [openrecordspa.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/pdaa\\_covid-19\\_guidance.pdf](http://openrecordspa.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/pdaa_covid-19_guidance.pdf)
- **CDC federal guidance** — [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html)

### Signage

- **DOH Reopening Business Flyer** — [www.pa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Reopening-Businesses-Flyer-8-5x11-1.pdf](http://www.pa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Reopening-Businesses-Flyer-8-5x11-1.pdf)

### Quick Access to These Documents

To access these documents noted above, go to [www.psats.org](http://www.psats.org), click on the COVID graphic, and look for this fact sheet. You will find hyperlinks for all there.



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