

## **CONDUCTING BOARD MEETINGS REMOTELY WITH TECHNOLOGY AND ALLOWING TRUSTEES TO ATTEND BY REMOTE ACCESS.**

### **Options:**

1. Allow remote attendance at any time
2. Do not allow remote attendance at all
3. Allow remote attendance for good reason
4. Hold one or more meetings completely virtually

### **Advantages to Remote Meeting Attendance:**

- Allows trustees to attend who might otherwise be unable to
- Could be easier for library directors to attend
- Reduces or eliminates travel time
- Reduces travel expenses. In 2015 we reimbursed trustees \$2,091 for travel
- Reduces staff time in meeting setup/refreshments if all virtual

### **Disadvantages to Remote Meeting Attendance:**

- It's harder to focus on the meeting when attending remotely
- It's harder to see if someone attending remotely is engaged
- May cause more work for staff at libraries if trustee doesn't have good connection and wants to attend at the library
- Sometimes hard for the person remotely to hear everything said around the table or for those around the table to hear the remote attendee
- Technical glitches
- Additional staff time for equipment set up, operation, and note-taking
- Lack of visual – loss of ability to read body language
- Trustees get to visit a variety of libraries

### **Legalities:**

- Statutes are silent on this issue.
- The *Wisconsin Open Meetings Law Compliance Guide* published by the Wisconsin Department of Justice gives guidelines for meeting by conference call. The Division for Libraries and Technology has held meetings through other electronic means.
- If a meeting is conducted entirely through virtual means provision must be made to allow members of the public to attend. This could be done by allowing attendance at one central site; there is no requirement that members of the public be allowed to connect virtually.

### **County Practice:**

Our member counties are mixed on this issue. I contacted the County Clerks and learned:

- Fond du Lac: Allows attendance by phone with the committee chair's approval. No more than two members may attend by phone. The person chairing the meeting must be physically present.
- Green Lake: Allows supervisors to attend by phone
- Marquette: Has not addressed this issue
- Waushara: Does not allow remote attendance
- Winnebago: Does not allow remote attendance

### **Other System Practice:**

- Five do not allow remote attendance.
- Eastern Shores: Only in an emergency
- Lakeshores: Bylaws allow but they have rarely used it.
- Mid-Wisconsin: GoToMeeting if board member is out of town. Additional comment which may need clarification: "Usually if they are gone, they are marked excused."
- Northern Waters: Two meetings per year are held completely remotely (let me check on this)
- South Central: Some trustees attend remotely
- Wisconsin Valley: Use for those who cannot attend in person. Specifically mentioned a trustee who could no longer drive.

### **Questions:**

- If allowed, will Winnefox staff specify the platform or will trustees be allowed to use the platform they're familiar with? If the latter, how do staff manage two or more separate connections?
- GoTo Meeting only has 25 "seats". Trustees and staff would likely take all seats at a completely virtual meeting, possibly making public attendance more difficult
- GoTo Webinar has more seats but attendees can't speak at will, making it hard for trustees to participate
- What effect would be expected if GoToMeetings were to be held and the Board would meet in Executive Session?
- What would need to be in place to know ahead of time that someone would be attending GoToMeeting?

### **Comments:**

- A board member who regularly misses board meetings may be viewed as simply not placing sufficient priority on board service. Can be looked at as a positive if it promotes regular attendance only in specific circumstances when a member is unable to attend.
- If we do, should probably state that remote participation will not be allowed solely for the convenience of the board member to avoid attendance at one or more particular meeting.
- South Central uses video conferencing and Freeconferencecall.com. While there is no charge for Freeconferencecall.com – there is a long-distance charged to the user.
- Concern for those users who do not have or use technology or who's internet connection is not good

### **Bylaw Wording:**

- South Central: Board members who are unable to participate in person at a meeting may attend such meetings by telephone or video conference. The Director shall select the conferencing equipment to be used and the location of the conference meeting place. The equipment selected shall be such that Board members are able to hear all participants at the meeting and be able to verbally communicate with all those present at the meeting.
- Lakeshores: Meetings of the Board of Trustees and/or any standing, special, or ad hoc committee may be held utilizing conferencing technology.