

CODE: BED

REMOTE PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Kittery School Committee allows members of the School Committee to participate in a public meeting of the School 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 School Committee members cannot be by text-only means such as email, text messages, or chat functions.

Members of the Kittery School Committee are expected to be physically present for School 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 School 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 School Committee action.

The School 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 School Committee.

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

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

3. The area of the School Committee’s jurisdiction includes geographic characteristics that impede or slow travel, including but not limited to islands not connected by bridges.

The opportunity for the public to comment at School Committee meetings (20-A MRSA §1002(20) applies to remote public meetings. If the School Committee allows or is required to provide an opportunity for public participation/public input during the meeting, an effective means of communication between the members of the School Committee and the public must be provided. Individuals with disabilities seeking a reasonable accommodation should contact the Superintendent of Schools as far in advance of the School Committee meeting as practicable.

Members of the public participating in public meetings of the School Committee are expected to comply with the guidelines for public participation provided in the School Committee’s policy BEDH.

Notice of all School Committee meetings is required (1 MRSA § 406). When the public may attend by remote methods, notice must include the means by which members of the public may access the meeting using remote methods. The notice must also identify a location for members of the public to attend in person. The School Committee may not determine that public attendance at a meeting will be limited solely to remote methods except under the conditions in subparagraph 1 above (emergency or urgent issue meetings).

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

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

The School Committee will make all documents and other materials to be considered by the School 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 School Committee in person, as long as additional costs are not incurred by the District.

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.

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

Cross Reference: BEC – Executive Session
 BE – Board Meetings
 BEDA – Notification of Board Meetings
 BEDB – Agenda
 BEDD – Rules of Order
 BEDH – Public Participation at Board Meetings
 BIC – Board Member Compensation
 KE – Public Concerns and Complaints

Adopted: September 7, 2021