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TO: County Members

FROM: Wisconsin Counties Association

RE: Conducting Meetings Remotely

DATE: March 24, 2020

During these unprecedented times, most are working from home in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. While this is all happening, the essential functions of government – federal, state and local – must continue on. This includes holding county board meetings, committee meetings, and the like.

On March 20, 2020 the Office of Open Government (OOG) within the Department of Justice issued a memo on conducting an open meeting while complying with the restrictions put in place by the state due to this public health emergency. Conducting an open meeting remotely has challenges related to both technology and keeping the public informed.

The OOG outlined in their memo several issues to consider:

- Governmental bodies must ensure that they follow the notice requirements in Wisconsin Statute [§19.84](#).
- Notices should provide instructions for how the public may access the remote meeting including providing the telephone number, video conference link, and any necessary passcodes or other login information.
- A governmental body conducting a meeting remotely should be mindful of the possibility that it may be particularly burdensome or even infeasible for one or more individuals who would like to observe a meeting to do so remotely.
- The governmental body should strongly consider providing the public with an alternative telephone dial-in option for observing a remote meeting so that lack of internet access is not a barrier to observing the meeting.
- At the beginning of each meeting conducted remotely, the chair of the governmental body should encourage all body members to identify themselves before they begin speaking and not to speak over one another.
- A governmental body may wish to consider recording the meeting and posting it on its website.
- Governmental bodies meeting remotely can and should consider steps that ensure that their meetings remain open and accessible to the public.

To view the entirety of the advisory from the OOG please visit:

https://www.doj.state.wi.us/sites/default/files/news-media/3.20.20_OOG_Final.pdf

In an effort to help county governments continue to function remotely, the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) has compiled a list of conference call and video conferencing options. Those options are:

1. Free Conference Call: www.FreeConferenceCall.com
2. Google Hangouts Meet (conference call and video conference options): <https://gsuite.google.com/products/meet/>
3. Join Me (conference call and video conference options): <https://www.join.me/>
4. Uber Conference (free edition offering longer call duration and larger number of participants): <https://www.uberconference.com/>
5. Zoom Video Conferencing (video conference and phone conference options): <https://zoom.us/home?zcid=2478>
6. Skype (free conference calls): <https://www.skype.com/en/free-conference-call/>
7. Skype for Business (fee based): <https://www.skype.com/en/business/>
8. Click Meeting (fee based after 7-day free trial): <https://clickmeeting.com/>

WCA has also been discussing with the Governor's office the options for relaxing the open meeting requirements as we navigate through the public health emergency. WCA will continue to keep you apprised of any developments in this area.