

Resolution R-2

Best Practices for Virtual and Hybrid Proceedings by Regional Councils, Executive Board, and the Standing Committee

Whereas, Resolution R-1 of the 226th Annual Convention established the Virtual Governance Task Force to address virtual governance and related issues of accountability, transparency, diversity and inclusion in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges such proceedings posed for our collective governance; and

Whereas, the Virtual Governance Task Force consulted widely about best practices for the fair, successful, and transparent conduct of virtual proceedings, consultations including interviews with current and former members of Executive Board, the Standing Committee, and Regional Councils, the Ecclesiastical Authority, key Diocesan staff, the Chancellor, as well as the conduct of surveys and interviews of lay and clergy leaders in this Diocese,

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, by the 227th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia, that:

1. We gratefully acknowledge and celebrate the hard work, resourcefulness, ingenuity, and resilience of diocesan staff, our Bishops, and members of the Standing Committee, Executive Board, and Regional Councils since February 2020 in successfully conducting virtual meetings of the Standing Committee, Executive Board, and Regional Councils, during a deadly pandemic, while observing appropriate safety measures; and
2. We adopt the attached best practice recommendations of the Virtual Governance Task Force to guide future virtual, hybrid, and in-person Standing Committee, Executive Board, and Regional Council proceedings while reliably assuring accountability and transparency in these future proceedings, promoting wider inclusion and greater diversity in these future proceedings, and taking steps to improve participation in future Diocesan Conventions.

Respectfully submitted,

Russell V. Randle
Lay Delegate, Christ Church, Alexandria
Chair, Virtual Governance Task Force
On behalf of the Virtual Governance Task Force

Best Practice Recommendations for Regional Councils, the Executive Board, and the Standing Committee

I. Regional Council and Executive Board Recommendations.

Regional Councils and the Executive Board meetings are to be open to members of congregations in the Diocese. To encourage transparency, accountability, and to improve understanding of their decisions across this Diocese, we recommend that

- Executive Board and Regional Council meeting dates, times, and physical and/or virtual meeting locations be posted on the Diocesan website at least two weeks before such meetings;
- Where feasible, these meetings be live-streamed by appropriate means (e.g. Facebook) readily available to people in the Diocese, with appropriate links posted
- Summaries of the decisions made at these meetings be posted on the Diocesan website within two days of the meeting, with minutes posted after their approval
- Where meetings have to be closed to discuss legal matters, personnel matters, or commercial negotiations, that these matters be conducted at the end of the meeting, with the livestream turned off, with an explanation posted that the discussion is closed for one of those reasons.
- Budget discussions are NOT to be closed.

II. Standing Committee Recommendations

Because of the nature of Standing Committee deliberations – interviews of candidates for ordination, Council of Advice for the Bishop, disciplinary matters, approval of indebtedness by congregations – its meetings are limited to those invited to attend. To further transparency and accountability, we recommend that the Standing Committee promptly post the results of final decisions that will become publicly known such as:

- Actions to consent to elections of Bishops and other canonical matters that are public under the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church
- Actions under Canons 14 and 15 of the Diocese to authorize congregations to encumber or sell real property

III. Recommendations for Virtual Proceedings.

Noting that these practices are already widely followed, we recommend that the Standing Committee, the Executive Board, and Regional Councils adopt the following best practices for their virtual or hybrid (part in-person) meetings:

- Each person's camera is on,
- Each person is muted unless speaking
- Each person informs the group when a member is leaving (e.g. via chat box) or is unable to attend
- Each voting member can be seen and heard clearly if some are present in person and some are attending by virtual means

IV. Recommendations to Improve Participation at Diocesan Convention

We note that some smaller congregations are encountering difficulties in sending representatives to Diocesan Convention, and noting further that many delegates receive little encouragement and support and find the Convention proceedings to be a mystery. In order to improve participation and compliance with canonical requirements, we recommend that:

1. Regional deans and councils contact clergy and lay delegates at least four weeks before Convention in order to
 - Encourage them to attend Diocesan Convention, explaining the canonical requirement for such attendance unless excused by the Ecclesiastical Authority
 - Find mentors for newer delegates who can help guide them at Convention and explain proceedings as they unfold
 - Help find virtual resources, transportation and accommodations where delegates face challenges in attending for such reasons

2. The Office of the Bishop, in advance of Diocesan Convention hearings, and again in the week before Convention, take steps to provide several virtual training sessions for lay and clergy delegates to Diocesan Convention. We recommend that these training sessions occur on weekends or in the evening. We recommend that these address:
 - Logistics of attendance (whether virtual or in person)
 - Overview of the hearings and how to participate
 - Where to find (virtually) the most up-to-date text of the budget, canonical amendments, and resolutions
 - Where to find the list of nominees for election to Diocesan offices (e.g. Standing Committee, General Convention Deputy)
 - Overview of topics for decision
 - How to participate in debate at Convention
 - Voting procedures for elections
 - Voting on contested issues of budget, canonical amendments and resolutions.

Respectfully submitted,

Virtual Governance Task Force – September 2021