

Resolution R-5 Best Practices Preparation for Persons with Special Needs to Participate in Virtual and Hybrid Governance Meetings

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 the Ecclesiastical Authority, key Diocesan staff, the Chancellor, the Office of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, and 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 our clergy and lay leaders since February 2020 in successfully conducting virtual Diocesan Convention, Executive Board, vestry meetings, vestry elections, congregational meetings, and in some cases, congregational votes on property matters, in the context of a deadly pandemic, while observing appropriate safety measures; and
2. We adopt the attached best practice recommendations for Meeting Preparation to Include People with Special Needs to help guide future virtual, hybrid, and in-person meetings of Diocesan Convention, Executive Board, Regional Council, congregational, and vestry proceedings while reliably promoting wider inclusion and greater diversity in these future proceedings.

Respectfully submitted,

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

MEETING PREPARATION TO INCLUDE PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

I. PRIOR TO MEETING

Survey the attendees to assess those who are differently abled or for whom English is not the dominant language. Include questions to ascertain whether individuals with impairments have their own technology, i.e., text to speech, speech to text and other accommodation software.

II. HEARING IMPAIRED

- In the meeting invitation, inform the attendees the steps being taken for accessibility provisions and provide an email address they can use to request additional accommodations.
- Assign an “accessibility advocate”, if required, before the meeting to make provisions, inform participants of the protocols and details, monitor live transcriptions, captioning, or other services. Capitalize on Captions if you plan on showing videos during the meeting, make sure the videos are captioned.
- Ensure that these accommodations fulfill the needs of the participants to provide equal access. In addition to captioning, accommodations that can be provided include an in-person American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, remote ASL interpreter, remote speech-to-text services, large print materials, and presentation slides as handouts with presenter notes.
- If you are using remote interpreters or service providers in a virtual meeting, book them with sufficient time to ensure availability. Provide them with access to your conferencing platform and test prior to the event. Provide interpreters meeting handouts and/or presentations in advance.

III. VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Issue all invitations, documents, etc. in large, non-serif fonts, 16 point is recommended for ADA compliance, use bold or semi-bold not light fonts. Avoid blocks of capital letters, underlined, italicized text. Check the platform you intend to use for accommodation features.

IV. BILINGUAL MEMBERS

If you are using remote interpreters or service providers in a virtual meeting, book them with sufficient time to ensure availability. Provide them with access to your conferencing platform and test prior to the event. Provide interpreters meeting handouts and/or presentations in advance.

- Capitalize on Captions if you plan on showing videos during the meeting. If Vestry members are not proficient English-speakers, make the necessary provisions for language Captions if needed.