



Recommendations on applying ONI Standards to neighborhood association elections and meetings amid COVID-19

The Office of Community & Civic Life recognizes that many groups are adapting how they conduct organizational activities due to COVID-19 by utilizing online platforms. We are providing the following information as recommendations to District Coalition Offices and Neighborhood Associations when conducting meetings and elections online.

At this time, the Office of Community & Civic Life will not enforce the aspects of ONI Standards that are more restrictive than state and city public health mandates. We encourage each District Coalition Office and Neighborhood Association to review their own bylaws and seek independent advice as needed in adapting organizational practices during the COVID-19 state of emergency.

1. Conducting Neighborhood Association Meetings Online

It is still possible to adhere to [ONI Standards for open meetings and public records](#) while conducting meetings online. To adhere to open meetings standards for meetings held online, you should provide:

- ✓ A public call in number and/or video conferencing link.
- ✓ Notice to the public stating the time, date, and call-in number and/or video conferencing link, with at least 7 days of notice prior to the meeting.
- ✓ Solicitation and fulfillment of requests for translation/interpretation and ADA accommodations to ensure the meeting is accessible.
- ✓ Post meeting records for public review in a reasonable amount of time after the meeting is complete.

2. Conducting Neighborhood Association Elections Online

It is also still possible to conduct board elections online while adhering to ONI standards. Carrying out elections while sticking to ONI Standards include:

- ✓ Voting should be done in a meeting open to public attendance. See guidance under question #1 for specifics.
- ✓ Voting at meetings may be done orally, by a show of hands, or by a written ballot that contains the name of the member voting and the vote of that member.
- ✓ For election of officers, board members, and other representative and delegates, voting may be done by secret ballot.
- ✓ Upon the request of any voting member, a show of hands shall follow an oral vote. Anyone wishing to see written ballots may do so at the meeting or anytime thereafter before the ballots are discarded. Written ballots must be retained for a period of 60 days after the vote and then may be discarded.”



Additional online elections considerations include:

- **Consent**
 - ✓ The participant should state or show their vote and consent to be a member.

- **The board should adopt guidelines and procedures before the election** and allow the board time to think through all the details of conducting the election via Zoom or another online platform.
 - ✓ The board should authorize participation by remote communication and adopt guidelines and procedures to:
 1. Verify that a person that is participating by remote communication is a member.
 2. Ensure that members can participate by remote communication in an effective manner.
 3. Keep a record of the vote of the member.

- **Proper notice should be given to the members.**
 - ✓ See guidance under question #1 for specifics.
 - ✓ Giving notice can include: the coalition website, the NA's website and newsletter.

Online platforms like Zoom have various options for conducting voting according to ONI Standards. Examples of online voting methods include:

- ✓ Asking members to type their vote in the comment box, facilitator or secretary records and tallies votes.
- ✓ Calling on participants for their oral vote while facilitator or secretary tallies and records.
- ✓ Asking members to click the “hand raising” icon and having the facilitator or secretary tally and record responses.

For election of officers, board members, and other representative and delegates via secret ballots, District Coalition Offices and Neighborhood Associations may consider other online tools such as [Ballot Box](#) and [Survey Monkey](#).

3. Postponing Activities

These are stressful times for many amidst layoffs, childcare, and community aid. Consider postponing your meeting and/or elections to a time when members and the public can best engage. Please refer to your bylaws to understand the best option for your Neighborhood Association.

If it is feasible to continue with the meeting or election, consider how best to use the limited time by shortening the agenda to include only the most urgent items.

4. Adapt

If your Neighborhood Association has determined it must meet, using remote meeting tools may take some getting used to by both meeting facilitators and participants.



Be ready for issues. You may find that your first try is a bit bumpy with a new process and technology, so be prepared with a back-up plan of what to do if it doesn't work the way you planned. [Click here for a practice meeting guide](#) to get you ready.

Zoom is a video conferencing option that may include fees. Zoom also includes additional services such as live captioning, tape recordings, and transcription services which are a good choice if you'd like to make your meeting more accessible to people with disabilities.

Additional tips on using Zoom for public meetings can be found on [PBOT's Zoom Guide](#).

5. Engaging the Public in Online Meetings

Neighborhood Associations should continue to facilitate civil discourse and an inclusive environment online. Extra preparation and precautions should be taken to reduce the chances of disrespectful disruption. A new surge of Zoom hackers and trolling is on the rise posting hateful and offensive content to public Zoom events, this is known as "zoom bombing".

Before every meeting, strategize with your team about what level of information flow you need, and how to achieve that. Please read tips in this Zoom article to get oriented with ways to manage your event: <https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/k>

To best support public participation during online meetings, try soliciting public comments to be submitted in writing ahead of time. A well-structured phone or web-based comment period will help things go smoothly. Prompt people to sign up first (if possible) and call on speakers one at a time in a pre-determined order.

Please remember to keep in mind that people who are 65 and older, and low-income populations tend to have less access to internet and technology than the general population. Additionally, our communities are adapting to care for school-aged children and new life routines. Not everyone has a quiet environment, or the technology set up at home to fully participate in a meeting through phone or online meetings.

6. Questions & Support

For questions about this document produced by the Office of Community & Civic Life, please contact Shuk Arifdjanov, Civic Engagement Coordinator, at Shuk.Arifdjanov@portlandoregon.gov.

To seek support from your District Coalition Office, please find contact information here: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/civic/28390>