

From: **Cindy Mester** <Cmester@fallschurchva.gov>
Date: Wed, Nov 18, 2020 at 2:20 PM
Subject: City of Falls Church Comment to VA FOIA Council- Electronic Meetings
To: foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov <foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov>
Cc: Cindy Mester <Cmester@fallschurchva.gov>

[Comments submitted on behalf of the City of Falls Church Council.](#)

Dear FOIA Council Members:

The City of Falls Church is fully committed to transparent public meeting along with well documented record keeping. Additionally, the adopted City Vision and Comprehensive Plan foundation cites the criticality for maximizing equitable and equality public participation, remove barriers and facilitate more representative, effective public policy. The City wants our advisory bodies to reflect the diversity of voices and lived experiences within our communities and firmly believe that the public benefits when their government reflects its population. This is relevant during the declared pandemic emergency but existed as a need prior to and will after the emergency.

The City requests the removal of the Commonwealth-imposed limit on individual electronic participation by members of a public body to include elected governing bodies (jurisdictions and school district) as well as appointed Planning Commission, Boards and Commissions (AAB, EDA, Historical, Human Services) and Regional (NVTC, NVTA).

At a minimum three specific recommendations we request positive action on:

- 1) Immediate action to remove the state-level cap on individual electronic participation by members of a public body while a quorum is physically present (i.e. to delete the last sentence of § 2.2-3708.2 (A)(1)(b) "Participation by a member pursuant to this subdivision is limited each calendar year to two meetings.")
- 2) A study of how flexibility could be increased for electronic meetings outside of an emergency while maintaining access for the public; and
- 3) The codification of language that allows public bodies to address any subject during emergency electronic meetings.

Thank you for your sincere consideration. Stay safe, Cindy Mester

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