

Dear Members of the FOIA Council,

Thank you for taking up the issue of increasing access via virtual meeting attendance. This pandemic has put a spotlight on this issue, and highlights lack of access to public meetings for those of us with small children or caring for aging parents. For those of us who are primary caretakers as well as elected officials, this would allow much greater access to meetings locally and in Richmond. As a member of the Blacksburg Town Council, I enjoy appointments on a variety of public boards and local merchant groups. There are times before Covid when I was unable to attend in person due to my son undergoing significant medical treatments. It would have been wonderful to still attend virtually.

Public bodies benefit from a diversity of voices and experiences, including those who have children and aging parents and better reflect the populations they represent when they include such members.

Please make changes to the current law to remove barriers to civic engagement and increase participation. Mr. Seltzer's proposal should be the baseline.

Thank you,

Lauren Colliver
Council Member
Town of Blacksburg