ELECTRONIC MEETINGS
PUBLIC COMMENT FORM

WE NEED YOUR HELP--Please give us your feedback regarding how meetings using electronic communications technology compare to traditional meetings where everyone is present in the same room at the same time.

1. Name of the public body holding the meeting: State Water Control Board/Department of Environmental Quality

2. Date of the meeting: June 29 2020

3. What are your overall thoughts or comments about this meeting?

This meeting was executed very poorly by DEQ. Remote participants (Board members and Public Commenters) were very clear. Occasionally DEQ speakers were clear when the telephone was moved closer to the speaker. More often than not, the speakers at DEQ were difficult to hear. No apparent effort was made by DEQ to correct this issue in the context of the meeting, despite it having been reported. It was not a technological limitation.

Also, breaks in the schedule were unplanned and not on the agenda. Scheduling breaks would be helpful to the public so we know when and for how long we can do other things (get lunch, etc!)

4. Where did you attend this meeting -- main meeting location OR from a remote location? (circle one)

5. Technology used for the meeting (audio only or audio/visual, devices and/or software used--please be as specific as possible--for example, speakerphone, iPad, Skype, WebEx, Telepresence, etc.):

   GoToWebinar audio and visual of public body

6. Were you able to hear everyone who spoke at the meeting (members of the body and members of the public)?

   Poor 1 2 3 4 Excellent 5

   COMMENT See previous comment.

7. How easy was it for you to obtain agenda materials for this meeting?

   Easy 1 2 3 4 Difficult 5

   COMMENT No comment.

8. Could you hear/understand what the speakers said or did static, interruption, or any other technological problems interfere?
Easy 2 3 4 5 Difficult

COMMENT See previous comment. Also, there were many times when someone other than the speaker shuffled papers, etc. These activities made an already difficult situation much, much worse.

9. If the meeting used audio/visual technology, were you able to see all of the people who spoke?
   Poorly 1 2 3 4 5 Clearly
   COMMENT I was unable to see anyone at DEQ other than the Chair and Vice Chair of the State Water Board. No effort was made to move the camera or to place speakers in frame for viewing. They were so distant to the camera, it was impossible to discern expression, etc.

10. If there were any presentations (PowerPoint, etc.), were you able to hear and see them?
    Poorly 1 2 3 4 5 Clearly
    COMMENT Viewing Powerpoints was fine. I do not believe there was any audio component to what was presented.

11. Were the members as attentive and did they participate as much as you would have expected?
    Less 1 2 3 4 5 More
    COMMENT See below

12. Were there differences you noticed in how the members interacted?
    With the other members present:
    Very Different 1 2 3 4 5 No Difference
    With members participating from other locations:
    Very Different 1 2 3 4 5 No Difference
    With the public:
    Very Different 1 2 3 4 5 No Difference
    COMMENT It was impossible to observe the interaction of the meeting members at DEQ. See previous comments. The remote Board Members were engaged and attentive. The members had very little interaction with the public. There was a point where a board member attempted to follow up on a public comment. This was impossible.

13. Did you feel the technology was a help or a hindrance?
    Hindered 1 2 3 4 5 Helped
COMMENT The technology exists to conduct these meetings properly. In this case, it was not appropriately employed by the agency.

14. How would you rate the overall quality of this meeting?
   Poor 2 3 4 Excellent
   1

COMMENT See previous comments. Rod Morgan (roderickmorgan@yahoo.com)

THANK YOU. Please send your completed form by mail, facsimile or electronic mail to the FOIA Council using the following contact information:

Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council
General Assembly Building, Second Floor
201 North 9th Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219
foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov/Fax: 804-371-8705/Tele: 866-448-4100