

From: **Kathryn Chiasson** <kathrynchiasson@gmail.com>
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Subject: Online Participation in Meetings
To: <foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov>

To whom it may concern,

I am writing today to express my support for continuing online participation in public meetings.

I chair the Alexandria Beautification Commission and during COVID I have seen my commission be more engaged, with a higher attendance rate, than we've had in years past. I have more confidence in FOIA compliance because of the Zoom recording and I know there are fewer barriers to entry for people who might have been unable to participate in the past.

I'm a new parent and I don't know how I would have been able to continue to participate in the commission if we lose the virtual component. People with caretaking responsibilities, work requirements, and so on will continue to be underrepresented in our boards and commissions and that's the last thing any of us want.

I moved to Alexandria four years ago and joined the Beautification Commission as a way to get to know my new community and it's definitely paid off. I am a more engaged and empowered citizen than I would have been otherwise. Every resident should have this opportunity.

Participation in civic life should not be limited to those with the means to be physically present in a community center on a weekday evening. We've seen that there can be a better way for both equity and transparency and it's online participation in civic life.

Kathryn Chiasson
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Chair, Alexandria Beautification Commission