

Virtual Public Hearings

As part of the collective effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19, Regional Council has approved procedures for Virtual Public Hearings. The procedures for Virtual Public Hearings are outlined in [Schedule 1 of Administrative Order 2020-009-ADM Respecting COVID-19](#).

The municipality will utilize a variety of approaches to ensure meetings can occur in a safe, responsible, inclusive, fair, and legal manner. There will be extended consultation periods, telephone call-in lines for those who sign up as speaker, CART captioning, and a webcast to take the place of in-person meetings for an interim period until in-person hearings can safely resume. Meetings of Community Council will only be webcasted and have cart captioning when a public hearing is included on the meeting agenda.

These hearings are open for anyone to speak at or to submit written comments and are your chance to share your opinions and views on specific topics with [Regional Council](#) or [community councils](#).

Public hearings are typically held to discuss:

- planning and development related matters
- new by-laws or changes to existing by-laws

How can I find out about upcoming virtual public hearings?

Typically, upcoming public hearings are advertised at least two weeks (14 days) in advance in [The Chronicle Herald](#) (with the exception of By-Law N-200 Noise Exemption applications).

As a result of COVID-19, this advertisement will now take place at least 3 weeks (21 days) in advance of meeting. This extended period of time will allow greater opportunity for community members to become aware of the proposal.

These advertisements will include the date and time of the hearing, and deadlines for submitting written correspondence and registering as a speaker.

You can also check our [public notices](#), [upcoming public hearings listing](#) and the our [upcoming agendas, meetings and reports](#) listing.

How do I sign up to speak at a virtual public hearing?

The public hearing ad will include the deadline for registration. You must register by the deadline in the in order to speak.

We would encourage all residents who think they may wish to speak to sign up by the deadline.

Following the deadline, if you change your mind and no longer wish to speak you can always ask to have your name removed.

When registering you can only add your own name to the list and not the name of another person.

To be placed on the speakers list, individuals can do one of the following:

- Send an email to clerks@halifax.ca. (Preferred)

- Call and leave a voicemail at 902.490.4210. Staff from the Clerk's Office will return your call.
- Send a fax to the clerk at 902.490.4208.

When signing up please include:

- The meeting body (e.g. Regional Council or Community Council) if you know it, the planning case number or civic address
- First and Last Name
- community of residence
- email address (if applicable)
- telephone number

During the public hearing you will have up to 5 minutes to provide your comments on the matter via telephone. Speakers will be called in the order they signed up.

How do I submit written comments for a virtual public hearing?

You may submit written comments for a public hearing to the Municipal Clerk's Office. Your comments must be received by the deadline in the public hearing advertisement. Comments received after this time will not be distributed.

Your comments must include at least your first initial, last name and a contact method (e.g. email address). Anonymous submissions will not be distributed.

Email (clerks@halifax.ca) is the preferred method, but submissions can also be sent via mail (please allow sufficient time for delivery) and fax.

Mailing Address:

Municipal Clerk's Office
Halifax Regional Municipality
PO Box 1749
Halifax, NS
B3J 3A5

Fax:

902.490.4208

What will happen to my written comments?

Your written comments will be distributed to members of Regional Council or the community council, as well as relevant staff. They will be kept on file as part of the official public record.

As part of the public record, your comments will be distributed to other members of the public by request. Your signature and contact information will be removed before your comments are distributed to the public; however, your full submission may be viewed by request in the Municipal Clerk's Office.

What will happen during the public hearing?

- Webcasts of Virtual Public Hearings at Regional Council and Community Councils will be available <https://www.halifax.ca/city-hall/agendas-meetings-reports>. Members of the public may watch the meeting but are not able to actively participate.
- Staff will begin the hearing by giving a presentation outlining the topic of the hearing, the process that has been undertaken to this point in the process, and an assessment against all relevant Municipal policies or by-laws.
- Staff will answer any questions members of Council or Community Council may have based on the presentation they just received.
- The public hearing will be open.
- The applicant (where applicable) will give their presentation.
- The applicant will answer any questions members of Council or Community Council may have based on the presentation they just received.
- Public Hearing speakers who registered by the deadline, will then be called using the order on the speakers list maintained by the Municipal Clerk's Office. Speakers will have 5 minutes each to state their opinions on the proposed change which is the subject of the hearing.
- Once the last speaker has been heard, the applicant will be given an opportunity to briefly respond to comments made by the public at the hearing.
- The public hearing will close.
- Staff may be asked questions of clarification as a result of the hearing from members of Council or Community Council.
- Council or Community Council will deliberate. They may make their decision at that time, or they may defer it to a future date. They will not hear any further speakers or accept any further written comments on the topic.

What will happen if there isn't enough time to hear all the speakers?

If the virtual public hearing can't be finished on the original date, Council will choose a date for a continuation. Only the remaining people whose names are on the speakers list who registered in advance may speak at the continuation.

How can I learn more about a Virtual Public Hearing topic?

Virtual public hearings are included as part of [Regional Council](#) or [community council](#) meetings. [Meeting agendas and reports are available online.](#)

More Questions?

If you have more questions about Virtual Public Hearings, please contact the Municipal Clerk's Office.