



# Procedures and Guidelines for Public Participation in Meetings

The Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) values the input it receives from members of the public during meetings and offers a variety of methods for participation, both in-person and virtually. The Council has taken steps necessary to ensure that the NVCOG will satisfy the conditions set forth in Executive Order 7b, and subsequently Public Act 22-3 for conducting NVCOG and Central Naugatuck Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (CNVMPO) meetings in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act's (FOIA's) requirement that these meetings be open to the public.

**OVERVIEW:** On April 28, 2022, Governor Ned Lamont signed Public Act No. 22-3, which permanently establishes the requirements for wholly or partially virtual public meetings in Connecticut. These requirements were originally established as a temporary solution during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but due to the convenience, effectiveness, and popularity of virtual meetings, they are now in effect indefinitely. This document will cover procedures for public participation during NVCOG meetings hosted in various formats. These guidelines adhere to all meetings conducted by NVCOG.

Henceforth, the following terms will refer to certain types of meeting situations:

IN-PERSON	VIRTUAL	HYBRID
<p>"In-person" meetings refer to the quorum of the voting members physically gathering in the NVCOG Conference Room or another meeting location.</p>	<p>"Virtual" or "remote" meetings refer to all the voting members participating via conference call, video conferencing technology or other technology.</p>	<p>Hybrid" meetings are when one or more voting members, but less than a quorum, are physically gathered in person while other voting members are attending the meeting virtually. Public information meetings are hybrid - while members of the public are encouraged to attend in-person a virtual component is made available for those facing barriers to do so.</p>

All meetings welcome public participation including meetings held with virtual components pursuant to Public Act 22-3. **NVCOG staff will post all meeting agendas on the NVCOG website along with how the meeting will be conducted.** This information is conveniently located on the "calendar" page of the website. **Only NVCOG hybrid and virtual meetings will be recorded while being streamed live via YouTube.** The hyperlink to view the live stream of a meeting will be made available on the NVCOG website calendar before the meeting starts. Public information meeting notices and flyers will contain information on how to join virtual meetings.

Members of the public have the same opportunities to participate virtually as they would have if the meeting were held in-person following the steps below. NVCOG can provide members of the public with a physical location and the equipment needed to attend a virtual meeting in real-time, if requested no less than 24 hours before the scheduled meeting.



For in-person meetings held in the NVCOG Conference Room, seating is available for members of the public who wish to verbally address the board, or committee and commission members, at the start of the meetings. We ask members of the public to adhere to any health or participation policies posted at the time.

**Members of the public interested in speaking during a virtual or hybrid Board and/or MPO meeting should complete the “public participation form” by the close of business on the day prior to the meeting.** The form is made available on the NVCOG website at the same time as the meeting agenda. Written comments, directed at agenda items, may be submitted using the contact information listed on the agenda.

**The following procedures are for public comment during regular NVCOG meetings:**

### **IN-PERSON VERBAL COMMENTS:**

Commenters must state their full name, address, and if they desire, their professional affiliation before speaking. If they do not, they cannot be allowed to continue.

### **VIRTUAL/HYBRID VERBAL COMMENTS:**

To submit a verbal comment, the commenter will need to fill out a form that will be available on the NVCOG website calendar with the posting of the meeting agenda. Instructions to call into the virtual meeting will be provided once the form is submitted.

- The form will ask commenters for their full name, address, and if they desire, their professional affiliation, all the information required to provide public comment, along with their phone number to identify each person in the virtual meeting.
- Comments on agenda items will be heard during the first designated portion of the meeting.
- Commenters must state their full name, address, and if they desire, their professional affiliation before speaking. If they do not, they cannot be allowed to continue.
- Commenters are limited to 2 minutes each, waivable at the discretion of the Chairman.
- Please be respectful of others.

### **WRITTEN COMMENTS:**

The public may submit written comments to the voting members by the close of business on the day before each meeting.

- All public comments will be presented at the beginning of each meeting. All commenters must include their name and address and if they desire, their professional affiliation.
- All written public comments will be made public.
- Written comments can be sent to the email address provided on the meeting agenda posted on the NVCOG website calendar, or mailed to:

Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments  
49 Leavenworth Street, 3rd Floor  
Waterbury, CT 06702



## COMMENTING DURING PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS (PIMS):

During in-person PIMs or other forms of public forums, during which there is a question-and-answer session or public input session, members of the public will speak one at a time. During virtual meetings, members of the public will utilize the “hand raising” function or equivalent to signal their interest in commenting, or the chat function to submit a comment. In both meeting formats staff will receive and record verbal comments delivered in front of those in attendance. Since public information meetings are typically project specific, written comments related to the project can also be submitted to the [contactus@nvcogct.gov](mailto:contactus@nvcogct.gov) email address.

### POSTING OF THE MEETING RECORD:

After the virtual and hybrid meetings have concluded, the meeting access information will be void. All meeting minutes will be posted to the NVCOG website within seven days, including a link to YouTube for a video of the recorded meeting. All is in accordance with state and federal information access laws and regulations.