

W.H. Walters Free Public Library

Remote and Emergency Meeting Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures that allow the Board of Trustees of the W.H. Walters Free Public Library to conduct public meetings remotely or on an emergency basis when permitted by law, while maintaining transparency, public access, and compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.

Legal Authority

This policy is adopted pursuant to and shall be interpreted in accordance with:

- New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.
- N.J.S.A. 52:27D-18.11 (Remote Public Meetings During a Declared Emergency)
- N.J.A.C. 5:39-1 et seq. (Electronic Public Meetings Regulations)
- Any applicable Executive Orders, emergency declarations, or guidance issued by the State of New Jersey.

Definitions

Remote Meeting

A public meeting conducted by electronic means (audio, video, or both) during a declared emergency that reasonably prevents the safe convening of an in-person meeting.

Emergency Meeting

A meeting held with less than forty-eight (48) hours' notice due to urgent circumstances requiring immediate Board action, as permitted by the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA).

Declared Emergency

A state, local, or public health emergency formally declared by the Governor of New Jersey or other authorized governmental entity.

Authorization to Hold Remote Meetings

The Board of Trustees may conduct a remote meeting when:

1. A declared emergency is in effect;
2. The emergency prevents or substantially limits the ability to safely conduct an in-person meeting; and
3. The public can be provided meaningful access to the meeting and an opportunity to participate.

The determination to conduct a remote meeting shall be made by the Board President, in consultation with the Library Director and/or Board Secretary.

Emergency Meetings (Short-Notice Meetings)

The Board may call an emergency meeting when:

- Matters of urgency arise that could not reasonably have been anticipated; and
- Delay would result in substantial harm to library operations, finances, or legal obligations.

Emergency meetings shall be limited to matters directly related to the emergency and shall comply with the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) notice requirements to the extent practicable.

Public Notice Requirements

A. Remote Meetings

Public notice for a remote meeting shall include:

- Date and time of the meeting
- Agenda or statement of matters to be discussed
- Statement that the meeting will be held remotely due to a declared emergency
- Instructions for public access (internet link, telephone number, access code)
- Instructions for submitting public comment.

Notice shall be provided at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance when possible, or as soon as practicable under emergency conditions.

Notice shall be:

- Posted on the Library's website
- Posted on the Library's official bulletin board

- Distributed to designated newspapers
- Shared through any additional communication channels customarily used by the Library, if applicable.

B. Emergency Meetings

For emergency meetings, notice shall be provided as soon as possible and shall state:

- That the meeting is an emergency meeting.
- The nature of the emergency.
- The matters to be discussed.

Technology Requirements

Remote meetings shall be conducted using a platform such as Zoom, or another comparable electronic meeting platform, that:

- Is routinely used in professional or governmental settings
- Is free and reasonably accessible to the public
- Allows participation by at least fifty (50) members of the public
- Includes both internet-based access and a telephone call-in option.

The Library shall make reasonable efforts to test technology prior to the meeting to ensure functionality.

Public Participation

- Public comment shall be permitted as required by the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA).
- Members of the public may participate by speaking during the meeting and/or by submitting written comments in advance, as specified in the meeting notice.
- The Board President may impose reasonable time limits and procedures to ensure orderly participation.

Conduct of the Meeting

- All quorum and voting requirements remain in effect during remote or emergency meetings.
- Votes shall be taken publicly and recorded.
- Executive session procedures shall comply with the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA).

- At the beginning of the meeting, the Board President shall announce that the meeting is being conducted remotely or on an emergency basis and state the reason for doing so.
- The meeting shall be conducted by the Board President or, in the President's absence, a trustee designated to preside over the meeting.

Trustee Remote Participation

Trustees requesting remote participation in a meeting shall notify the Board President and Library Director in advance whenever practicable. Remote participation by trustees must be authorized by the Board President and conducted in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), applicable laws or regulations, and Library policy.

Minutes and Records

- Minutes shall be taken and approved in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA).
- Minutes shall reflect that the meeting was conducted remotely or as an emergency meeting and identify the applicable emergency declaration.
- Meeting recordings, if created, shall be retained in accordance with records retention requirements.
- All records shall be subject to the Open Public Records Act (OPRA).

Accessibility

The Library shall make reasonable efforts to ensure accessibility, including:

- Telephone access for residents without internet service.
- Advance posting of meeting materials when feasible.
- ADA accommodations upon request.

Review and Training

This policy shall be reviewed periodically by the Board of Trustees. Board members and relevant staff shall receive training on OPMA compliance and remote meeting procedures as appropriate.

Effective Date

This policy shall take effect upon adoption by the Board of Trustees of the W.H. Walters Free Public Library at a duly noticed public meeting.

Adoption

Adopted by the **W.H. Walters Free Public Library Board of Trustees** on **May 18, 2026.**