



## **CITY OF WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS**

### **City Council Agenda Communication**

**Meeting Date:** December 15, 2025

**Prepared By:** Valeri Brod, City Clerk

**Agenda Item:** Remote Attendance Policy Amendment and Codification

**Explanation:** The Illinois General Assembly recently passed legislation amending the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to permit members of a public body to attend meetings remotely for the purpose of “performance of active military duty as a service member.” This amendment takes effect on January 1, 2026. Additionally, in 2020, the General Assembly expanded the allowable reasons for remote attendance to include “unexpected child care obligations.”

The City of Washington’s Rules of Procedure currently recognize only three reasons for remote attendance:

- (i) illness or disability;
- (ii) employment or City business; and
- (iii) a family or other emergency.

Based on legal guidance, it is recommended that the City update its Rules of Procedure to align with the State statute by incorporating all allowable reasons for remote attendance.

**Fiscal Impact:** none

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends approval of the proposed amendment and codification.

ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF WASHINGTON CODE AND CITY  
COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURES REGARDING  
REMOTE CITY COUNCIL MEETING ATTENDANCE

**WHEREAS**, on May 16, 1983, the City Council of the City of Washington adopted the City Council Rules of Procedure ("Rules of Procedure") to establish rules governing the conduct of City Council meetings; and

**WHEREAS**, the Rules of Procedure include certain rules and restrictions with respect to the ability of members of the City Council to remotely attend City Council meetings in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act, 5 ILCS 120/1 *et seq.*; and

**WHEREAS**, recent amendments to the Illinois Open Meetings Act expand the circumstances under which members of public bodies may remotely attend meetings; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council of the City of Washington has determined that it is necessary and in the best interests of the City to amend the Rules of Procedure, and to codify within the City Code, the City Council's remote attendance policy; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 9.2 of the Rules of Procedure provide that the Rules of Procedure may be amended "by a majority vote of all members of the Council, provided that the proposed amendments or new rules shall have been introduced into the record at a prior Council meeting."

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WASHINGTON, TAZEWELL COUNTY, ILLINOIS, IN THE EXERCISE OF ITS HOME RULE POWERS, AS FOLLOWS:**

**Section 1.** The foregoing recitals shall be and are hereby incorporated as findings of fact as if said recitals were fully set forth herein.

**Section 2.** Section 10 of the Rules of Procedure are hereby amended as follows (additions are indicated by **bold underline**; deletions by ~~strikeout~~):

10. Remote Attendance by Council Members: Any member of the City Council may attend and participate in any open or closed meeting of said public body from a remote location via electronic means provided that such attendance is in compliance with the rules set forth herein and any other applicable laws.
  - (1) Prerequisites. Any member of the City Council shall be provided the opportunity to attend an open meeting via electronic means from a remote location if a quorum is physically present at the meeting site, the quorum votes to approve the attendance in the open session by electronic means, and the requesting member meets the following conditions:

- (a) The member must notify the City Clerk at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the scheduled meeting, unless such notice is impractical, so that necessary communications equipment can be arranged. Said notification to the City Clerk shall be in writing by email. Inability to make the necessary technical arrangements will result in denial of a request for electronic attendance.
  - (b) The member must assert one (1) of the ~~three (3)~~ **five (5)** following reasons why he or she is unable to physically attend the meeting:
    - (i) due to personal illness or disability;
    - (ii) due to employment purposes or other City business;
    - (iii) due to a family emergency or other emergency;
    - (iv) **unexpected child care obligations;**
    - (v) **performance of active military duty as a service member. "Active military duty" has the same meaning as "Active service" in Section 1-10 of the Service Member Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. "Service member" means a resident of Illinois who is a member of any component of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard of any state, the District of Columbia, a commonwealth, or a territory of the United States.**
- (2) Quorum and Vote Required. Providing the above prerequisites have been met and following roll call to establish that a quorum is physically present at the meeting site, the presiding officer shall inquire of the City Council if there are any objections to the request to allow the member to remotely attend the meeting via electronic means. If no objection is raised, the request to allow the member to remotely attend the meeting via electronic means shall be deemed unanimously approved. However, if an objection is raised by any member of the City Council, a vote must be taken to allow each remote participation via electronic means. The motion must be approved by a vote of a majority of the City Council.
- (3) Adequate Equipment Required. Any member participating electronically and other members of the City Council must be able to communicate effectively, and members of the audience must be able to hear all communications at the meeting site. Before allowing remote attendance via electronic means at any meeting, the City Council shall provide equipment adequate to accomplish this objective at the meeting site.

**Section 3.** Section 2-61 (entitled “Attendance at Meetings”) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Washington is hereby amended as follows (additions are indicated by **bold underline**; deletions by ~~strikeout~~):

Sec. 2-61. - Attendance at meetings.

**(a)** ~~Alder~~persons shall attend all meetings of the city council including all committee of the whole meetings.

**(b) Remote Attendance by Council Members:** Any member of the City Council may attend and participate in any open or closed meeting of said public body from a remote location via electronic means provided that such attendance is in compliance with the rules set forth herein and any other applicable laws.

**a. Prerequisites.** Any member of the City Council shall be provided the opportunity to attend an open meeting via electronic means from a remote location if a quorum is physically present at the meeting site, the quorum votes to approve the attendance in the open session by electronic means, and the requesting member meets the following conditions:

**i.** The member must notify the City Clerk at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the scheduled meeting, unless such notice is impractical, so that necessary communications equipment can be arranged. Said notification to the City Clerk shall be in writing by email. Inability to make the necessary technical arrangements will result in denial of a request for electronic attendance.

**ii.** The member must assert one (1) of the five (5) following reasons why he or she is unable to physically attend the meeting:

- 1. due to personal illness or disability;**
- 2. due to employment purposes or other City business;**
- 3. due to a family emergency or other emergency;**
- 4. unexpected child care obligations;**
- 5. performance of active military duty as a service member. “Active military duty” has the same meaning as “Active service” in Section 1-10 of the Service Member Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.” “Service member” means a resident of Illinois who is a member of any component of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard of any state, the District of Columbia, a commonwealth, or a territory of the United States.**

**b. Quorum and Vote Required.** Providing the above prerequisites have been met and following roll call to establish that a quorum is physically present at the meeting site, the presiding officer shall inquire of the City Council if there are any objections to the request to allow the member to remotely attend the meeting via electronic means. If no objection is raised, the request to allow the member to remotely attend the meeting via electronic means shall be deemed unanimously approved. However, if an objection is raised by any member of the City Council, a vote must be taken to allow

each remote participation via electronic means. The motion must be approved by a vote of a majority of the City Council.

- c. Adequate Equipment Required. Any member participating electronically and other members of the City Council must be able to communicate effectively, and members of the audience must be able to hear all communications at the meeting site. Before allowing remote attendance via electronic means at any meeting, the City Council shall provide equipment adequate to accomplish this objective at the meeting site.

**Section 4.** This Ordinance is hereby ordered to be published in pamphlet form by the City Clerk and said Clerk is ordered to keep at least three (3) copies hereof available for public inspection in the future and in accordance with the Illinois Municipal Code.

**Section 5.** This Ordinance is in addition to all other ordinances on the subject and shall be construed therewith except as to that part in direct conflict with any other ordinance, and in the event of such conflict, the provisions hereof shall govern.

**Section 6.** This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect on January 1, 2026.

**PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WASHINGTON,  
TAZEWELL COUNTY, ILLINOIS, IN REGULAR AND PUBLIC SESSION THIS \_\_\_\_  
DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_, 2025.**

**AYES:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAYS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVED:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk