

CITY OF JACKSONVILLE
OFFICE OF ETHICS, COMPLIANCE, AND OVERSIGHT
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HOW TO OBSERVE & PARTICIPATE IN CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS
DURING THE COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY

During the COVID-19 State of Emergency, the City of Jacksonville is taking steps to keep local government open and accessible to the public while also protecting the health, safety and welfare of the community. The Governor of Florida issued Executive Order 20-69 allowing local city governments to hold public meetings using telephones or computers. Until it is safe to gather at City Hall again, City Council meetings will be held virtually. Below you will find a step-by-step guide to observing and participating in this new meeting format.



Step 1: Find the Meeting Notice on the City's Homepage

City Council meeting notices can be found on the City's calendar (Click on "All Events") on the main homepage at www.coj.net. Meeting notices will include the topics to be covered, the date and time of meetings, instructions for accessing the virtual meeting room via the app and phone, and instructions for making public comment if applicable. Additionally, any meeting materials that would typically be distributed at the meeting will be posted on the City Council's website prior to the meeting.



Step 2: Familiarize Yourself with the Zoom Program

Zoom is available for free at <https://zoom.us/>. The program will allow you to observe City Council meetings as they happen. If you sign-in using your computer, you will see video of the City Council members from their offsite locations. You can also use your phone to call-in and listen to the audio as it happens. If you are using Zoom for the first time, please give yourself time before the meeting starts to download the app or create an account. If you miss the meeting, do not worry! Recordings of City Council meetings will be available on the City Council's website after the meetings occur.



Step 3: Provide Public Comment from Home

The meeting notice will provide information and instructions so that you can provide your comment on public issues. Please know that informational meetings may not include a public comment time but this will be clear in the meeting notice. If you do not find information regarding public comment in the meeting notice, you can reach out to the meeting contact whose information is found at the bottom of the notice. You can also call the City's helpline, 630-CITY. Comments there are shared with the proper officials and tracked along with all of the other calls on the same topic.

Please have patience. This is a time of learning for us all! We are also learning and expect there may be some mistakes as we move forward together in these challenging times. Please help us improve our process by submitting feedback and suggestions to ethics@coj.net.

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**Frequently Asked Questions about City Council Meetings during
COVID-19 State of Emergency**

Q.	Is the City Council required to hold in-person public meetings in City Hall under the Sunshine Law during the COVID-19 emergency?
A.	No. It is not safe to gather in City Hall at this time. The Governor of Florida issued Executive Order 20-69 allowing city governments to hold virtual meetings by phone or computer during the State of Emergency.
Q.	Can I still attend City Council Meetings?
A.	Yes. Meeting notices will include instructions on how the public can observe virtual City Council meetings from home through Zoom, live stream and phone. Access is free and open to everyone. However, to view meetings through Zoom, you will need to visit https://zoom.us/ and create a free account.
Q.	Where can I find the meeting notices for City Council meetings?
A.	City Council meeting notices can be found on the City's calendar on the homepage at www.coj.net . In the bottom left hand corner, click on View All Events. There you will find a list of all upcoming meetings. Click on the meeting title for a full notice.
Q.	How will I know what will be discussed during City Council meetings?
A.	Meeting notices will typically include general topics to be discussed during the City Council meeting. Additionally, any materials or documents to be distributed at the meeting will be posted on the City Council's website prior to the meeting.
Q.	How can I comment at virtual City Council meetings?
A.	When public comment is required, several options will be provided in the meeting notice. The options may include comment by email and phone. If you do not find instructions in the notice, reach out to the contact person provided near the bottom of each notice.
Q.	What if I cannot wait until the next City Council Meeting to share information with the City?
A.	You can get messages to the City any time by calling the City's helpline, 630-CITY. When you ask your questions and report your concerns there, they are shared with the proper officials and tracked along with all of the other calls on the same topic.

Additional questions may be submitted to ethics@coj.net.