

QUESTION

May we conduct a regularly scheduled trustee meeting that was posted but a quorum is not present? Specifically, may we discuss some issues with those trustees who did show up as long as no major decisions are made and/or no votes are cast?

ANSWER

Per **RSA 91-A:2**, you need to have a quorum for a meeting that is open to the public. Note that a member can participate by telephone or other electronic means (such as skype) as long as communication is audible to everyone present.

91-A:2 Meetings Open to Public. –

I. For the purpose of this chapter, a "meeting" means the convening of a quorum of the membership of a public body, as defined in RSA 91-A:1-a, VI, or the majority of the members of such public body if the rules of that body define "quorum" as more than a majority of its members, **whether in person, by means of telephone or electronic communication, or in any other manner such that all participating members are able to communicate with each other contemporaneously**, subject to the provisions set forth in RSA 91-A:2, III, for the purpose of discussing or acting upon a matter or matters over which the public body has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power.

RSAs below**91-A:2 Meetings Open to Public. –**

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- (a) Strategy or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining;
- (b) Consultation with legal counsel;
- (c) A caucus consisting of elected members of a public body of the same political party who were elected on a partisan basis at a state general election or elected on a partisan basis by a town or city which has adopted a partisan ballot system pursuant to RSA 669:12 or RSA 44:2; or
- (d) Circulation of draft documents which, when finalized, are intended only to formalize decisions previously made in a meeting; provided, that nothing in this subparagraph shall be construed to alter or affect the application of any other section of RSA 91-A to such documents or related communications.

III. A public body may, but is not required to, allow one or more members of the body to participate in a meeting by electronic or other means of communication for the benefit of the public and the governing body, subject to the provisions of this paragraph.

(a) A member of the public body may participate in a meeting other than by attendance in person at the location of the meeting only when such attendance is not reasonably practical. Any reason that such attendance is not reasonably practical shall be stated in the minutes of the meeting.

(b) Except in an emergency, a quorum of the public body shall be physically present at the location specified in the meeting notice as the location of the meeting. For purposes of this subparagraph, an "emergency" means that immediate action is imperative and the physical presence of a quorum is not reasonably practical within the period of time requiring action. The determination that an emergency exists shall be made by the chairman or presiding officer of the public body, and the facts upon which that determination is based shall be included in the minutes of the meeting.

(c) Each part of a meeting required to be open to the public shall be audible or otherwise discernable to the public at the location specified in the meeting notice as the location of the meeting. Each member participating electronically or otherwise must be able to simultaneously hear each other and speak to each other during the meeting, and shall

be audible or otherwise discernable to the public in attendance at the meeting's location. Any member participating in such fashion shall identify the persons present in the location from which the member is participating. No meeting shall be conducted by electronic mail or any other form of communication that does not permit the public to hear, read, or otherwise discern meeting discussion contemporaneously at the meeting location specified in the meeting notice.

(d) Any meeting held pursuant to the terms of this paragraph shall comply with all of the requirements of this chapter relating to public meetings, and shall not circumvent the spirit and purpose of this chapter as expressed in RSA 91-A:1.

(e) A member participating in a meeting by the means described in this paragraph is deemed to be present at the meeting for purposes of voting. All votes taken during such a meeting shall be by roll call vote.