

COVID-19's Impact on Municipal Meetings and Timelines

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COVID-19 has impacted every facet of our lives, including the way municipalities conduct public meetings. An amendment to House Bill 1564 cruised through the State House on Wednesday, March 25, 2020, (190-0) and is heading to the State Senate, which meets next on April 6, 2020.

HB 1564 would amend the General Local Government Code ("Emergency Code"), which applies to all political subdivisions in the Commonwealth when the Governor has declared a disaster or state of emergency. Below is a general summary of the main parts of the proposed amendment to the Emergency Code:

- 1.) A governing body of a municipality can conduct a public meeting by phone and without a physical quorum at one location.
- 2.) A municipality can post notice of a public meeting on its website 24 hours before the meeting instead of advertising the meeting in a newspaper of general circulation.
- 3.) Public participation must occur by phone and the meeting must be either (i) live-streamed online, (ii) recorded and made available on the municipality's website within 24 hours of the meeting, or (iii) draft minutes made available on the municipality's website within 24 hours of the meeting.
- 4.) Timelines established by state law, charter or ordinance for municipal approval of all applications, plats, and plans will be tolled. The applicable timeline will be tolled as of the date of the disaster or emergency declaration and will continue on the date following the termination of the disaster or emergency or the final extension thereof.

Here is a link to the full text of the proposed amendment.

For additional information contact Daniel Conlon.