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Subject: New State Law: Virtual Meetings for Advisory Bodies
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For distribution to board members and submission as written general public comment for your body's next meeting:

Hello Commissioners and Board Members! I'm Jacob Wasserman, a member of the Planning Commission, and I wanted to share with you a new state law that was just signed, SB 707, that **allows municipal advisory bodies to meet virtually** if certain steps are followed. Here is the bill: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billVersionsCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=202520260SB707. The relevant section is § 54953.8.6 (Sec. 14). I encourage you to read it over.

Preface: I am sending this out as information only. Each board can decide for themselves whether virtual meetings, in-person meetings, or a mix of both makes most sense. I only recommend that you at least agendize a discussion about this.

I am also not sending this out representing the City nor the Planning Commission (indeed, my own commission isn't even eligible), just as someone who worked with the legislative staff who drafted the bill. I have not consulted with City staff before sending this.

SB 707 allows for advisory bodies to meet virtually or in a hybrid fashion. This can expand the pool of people able to serve and can open meetings up to a wider audience. And while virtual public comment is always an option open to a board, even if the members themselves meet in person, holding virtual or hybrid meetings for the board is also a good occasion to figure out the procedures for and to implement opening up virtual public comment as well (required for virtual/hybrid meetings).

Even if your board plans to mostly continue to meet in person, having a virtual option provides flexibility. For instance, you could regularly schedule every other meeting virtual and in person. Or you could generally meet in person but use the virtual option to hold a meeting that would otherwise be canceled for lack of quorum when certain board members are unavailable to come in person. Or you could always meet in person—with a social (or bylaws-mandated) expectation of in-person board attendance—but allow hybrid participation for members to occasionally participate remotely when they can't make it (without having to worry about the strictures of other, more limited hybrid meetings options under state law).

The rules are described in full in the link above, but in summary:

- **Starts January 1, 2026**
- City Council must first approve each body's use of these provisions. Then the body itself must approve, in person, before meeting thereafter remotely.
- City Council must renew each body's use of these provisions every six months.
- Cameras must remain on if possible at all times.
- A physical location must still be selected by vote of the body to be open for public viewing and comment. A staff person must be there.

These are the types of bodies that are eligible:

"For purposes of this section, 'eligible subsidiary body' means a legislative body that meets all of the following:

- ...Serves exclusively in an advisory capacity.
- Is not authorized to take final action on legislation, regulations, contracts, licenses, permits, or any

other entitlements, grants, or allocations of funds.

- Does not have primary subject matter jurisdiction, as defined by the charter, an ordinance, a resolution, or any formal action of the legislative body that created the subsidiary body, that focuses on elections, budgets, police oversight, privacy, removing from, or restricting access to, materials available in public libraries, or taxes or related spending proposals.

An eligible subsidiary body may include members who are elected officials, members who are not elected officials, or any combination thereof."

I have sent this to all boards to which I think the law could apply: Airport; Arts; Sustainability, Environmental Justice, and the Environment; Disabilities; Housing; Human Services; Recreation and Parks; Audit; Transit Security; Urban Forest; Community Gardens; Virginia Avenue Park; Field Sports; Santa Monica Aquatics

By my read, the following bodies are *not* eligible for the following reasons: Architectural Review (quasi-judicial/not purely advisory); Building and Fire-Life Safety (quasi-judicial/not purely advisory); Landmarks (quasi-judicial/not purely advisory); Library (may set policy on book availability and not purely advisory—can accept money); Personnel (quasi-judicial/not purely advisory); Planning (quasi-judicial/not purely advisory); Public Safety Reform and Oversight (addresses police oversight among primary subject matter); Clean Beaches and Ocean Parcel Tax Citizens Oversight (addresses taxes as primary subject matter); Housing Authority (not purely advisory); Measure GS Resident Oversight (addresses taxes as primary subject matter); Transient Occupancy Tax (addresses taxes as primary subject matter)

All bodies, even those ineligible for these new virtual SB 707 provisions, can continue to have certain members participate remotely on a select number of occasions if they have just cause (rules and number of meetings laid out in § 54953.8.3 (Sec. 11) of [SB 707](#), which is mostly the same as the former [AB 2449](#) (2022)).

Please note that I am not a lawyer, and nothing I say here is legal advice. For instance, my listing of eligible and ineligible bodies is only my read of the law, not determinative in any way.

Also please note that **this is all subject to resource and technological constraints**. If your body does not have the staff capacity or equipment to do virtual meetings, though, I still suggest you discuss this, as expressing your desire for a virtual option could then lead to changes that allow it.

More than happy to answer any questions about this!

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