



Town of Dudley Massachusetts
Board of Selectmen
Office of the Town Administrator
71 West Main Street, Dudley, MA 01571

Steven Sullivan
Chairman

John Marsi
Vice Chairman

Kerry Cyganiewicz
Clerk

Paul Joseph
Selectman

Jason Johnson
Selectman

Jonathan Ruda
Town Administrator

Tel: 508-949-8001
www.dudleyma.gov

TO: All Residents of the Town of Dudley, Elected, Appointed Dudley Officials, All Dudley Staff and Volunteers

FROM: Jonathan Ruda, Town Administrator

DATE: March 16, 2020

CC: **ALL MEDIA OUTLETS-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, Governor Baker issued an emergency Order on March 12, 2020, allowing public bodies greater flexibility in utilizing technology in the conduct of meetings under the Open Meeting Law. The Town of Dudley greatly values the participation of its citizens in the public meeting process, but given the current circumstances and recommendations at both the state and federal levels to limit or avoid public gatherings, together with the present closure of Town Hall, the schools, the library and senior center, including the schools to the public, the Town has decided to implement the “remote participation” procedures allowed under Governor Baker’s emergency Order for all boards, committees, and commissions. This means that:

1. All or any of the members of the public body may choose to participate in a public meeting via remote access. Meetings may be virtual, in their entirety.
2. The public will not be allowed into a Board/Committee meeting, even where there are any members of the public body and/or Town staff or official(s) physically present at the meeting location during the meeting.



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3. However, the public will be provided with alternative access through which they can watch or listen to meetings “in real time,” and meeting notices will specify the manner in which members of the public may access audio or video of the meeting as it is occurring.
4. “Public comment” portions of meetings will be temporarily suspended. Persons wishing to submit written comments may do so via mail to the attention of the Board/Committee holding the meeting, or via email to: selectmen@dudleyma.gov, copying administrator@dudleyma.gov. Statements received at least 8 hours prior to a non-emergency meeting that comport with our general policies regarding public comment may be read aloud during the meeting, acknowledged by the body’s member(s), and/or maintained as part of the record of the meeting.
5. When possible and feasible, the Town will post relevant public records expected to be discussed at a Board/Committee meeting on its website prior to the meeting, so that the public may view these documents in conjunction with the topics discussed at the meeting.
6. If, despite our best efforts, our technological capabilities do not adequately support public access to virtual or remote meetings, the Town will ensure that an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of the proceedings at the meeting is posted on the Town’s website as soon as possible after the meeting.
7. Meeting notices will still be posted at least 48 hours in advance (not counting Saturdays, Sundays, or legal holidays), unless it is an emergency meeting as defined under the Open Meeting Law (in which event, the meeting notice will be posted with as much advanced notice as is possible in the circumstances). Minutes will still be taken.
8. For public hearings, i.e., meetings at which the public has a legal right to participate, we encourage you to consider submitting written comments via mail or to the above email address, at least 8 hours prior to the public hearing. However, special arrangements will



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be made so that members of the public who wish to make oral statements during the meeting are provided with a means to do so, remotely. Notices for public hearings will contain this additional information. Please note that where public hearings are required to be advertised in our local newspapers, the publication notice may not contain detailed information about remote participation, as the specifics of that participation may not be known at the time of the publication notice. This may be particularly true as we initially implement the practice of remote participation meetings. The meeting notice will be posted on the Town's website and will be updated with that specific information as necessary, so be sure to check the website prior to the public hearing for information on how to participate in the hearing if you wish to do so.

9. For executive session meetings, the public has the right to attend and observe the convening of the meeting in open session, and the public body's vote to go into executive session. Accordingly, public access to the meeting will be limited to the open session portion(s) of the meeting only. Public access to any audio, video, internet or web-based broadcast of the meeting will be discontinued when the public body enters executive session. In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, the chair will declare whether the body intends to return to open session after the executive session, or to adjourn from executive session. Efforts will be made to avoid scheduling executive sessions in the middle of an open meeting. Rather, when possible, they will be scheduled at the start or at the end of meetings, to facilitate the public's ability to view or hear the open session meeting as it is occurring, without undue confusion.
10. Where individuals have a right, or are required, to attend a public meeting or hearing, including executive session meetings, they will be provided with information about how to participate in the meeting/hearing remotely.

Please check individual meeting agendas on the Town's website, dudleyma.gov, for the latest information regarding meetings. Each meeting may experience unique circumstances that may require last minute changes in protocol, including cancellation or



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rescheduling. We appreciate your patience as we undergo this shift in a significant aspect of how the Town conducts business.