

Putney's Selectboard currently does hold hybrid meetings, as does our Planning Commission, our Development Review Board, and, when they meet, our Board of Civil Authority and our Board of Abatement. In addition, our Selectboard meetings are recorded by Brattleboro Community TV and kept in perpetuity online via YouTube. Hybrid meetings have vastly expanded our accessibility to the public, and have added flexibility to our meetings when members are unable to meet physically for whatever reason. However, we have also enjoyed the flexibility not to hold hybrid meetings. We have convened meetings for site visits and also for informational meetings in larger spaces not equipped with hybrid technology. We recently convened for 5 minutes to approve our Town Meeting Warning without a hybrid option. (Had we been required to, setting up the system would have taken more time than the actual meeting). And the option to be able to continue the work of the Town should the technology fail, as we all know it often does, is essential.

Fully remote meetings, especially for our advisory committees, have been essential to the work of those committees, given that we do not have enough physical locations (or enough hours in the day) in our Town to hold multiple public meetings at the same time, leading to complications with scheduling.

Both of these options have proven to be successful in our Town.

Currently, the pandemic-era flexibility given to Towns to hold fully remote meetings, hybrid meetings, or physical-only meetings is working well and has increased engagement in not only the public but has helped make it possible for people to volunteer their time. Thank you for amending this bill to remove the requirement of hybrid meetings at the municipal level.

I would urge the final bill ensure the following:

Ample training and resources to implement hybrid meetings should communities choose. There is an art to running a truly accessible hybrid meeting.

Simple and easy to understand Open Meeting Law requirements. It is disappointing to have to spend time curing unintended violations rather than doing the work of the Town.

That there is municipal representation on the proposed study committee.

Thank you for all of your work and also for your time the other day!

Aileen Chute  
Chair of the Putney Selectboard