

Dear Senators,

I am a lifelong resident of Belvidere, Vermont, and a member of the Belvidere Selectboard. I am sending this email today as a concerned citizen, however, and do not officially represent the Selectboard in any way.

We are one of the smallest towns in Vermont and already struggle to fill our elected and appointed offices. To mandate that we add another layer of administrative burden to our task of handling the Town's business with a hybrid meeting requirement makes the job exponentially more complex. The hybrid requirement alone will be difficult to meet due to the limited resources we have for equipment and technical expertise, and most importantly our unreliable internet service. Hybrid meetings are technologically challenging and more difficult to run, and the equipment to implement hybrid meetings is expensive and requires ongoing annual costs.

Our Town officials tirelessly work countless hours already, mostly on a volunteer basis, and do not need another bureaucratic mandate to comply with - we struggle to meet State mandates already imposed on us. Our Town has a website where meeting notices, agendas and minutes are posted so that the public has electronic access to what is taking place if they so choose, and those folks who are sincerely interested in local governance already participate by attending meetings in person or reaching out to our town officials one-on-one.

An additional mandate from the State of Vermont will only have a negative impact on the operation of our small Town's government. A one-size-fits-all solution is inadequate here in Vermont, where small towns like Belvidere struggle to accomplish the everyday "chores" to operate the Town on behalf of its citizenry in a reasonable and financially responsible way. Mandating additional chores for our local officials to comply with, such as hybrid meeting requirements, only hastens the burnout of those people dedicated to their elected or appointed offices, and creates more of a conundrum for small towns to fill their positions as time goes on. Holding fully remote meetings, hybrid meetings, or in-person meetings should be left to the discretion of the local public body.

I thank you all for your service and for your willingness to hear from ordinary citizens to reach a compromise on this subject.

Respectfully,
Kenneth Adams Jr.