

Testimony for Hybrid Meetings:

Isle La Motte is very remote and a small community, about 500 year-round residents. We have been successfully hybrid for several years now. We (before I was on the board) originally were just using a laptop facing the selectboard, but the audio was extremely poor, so I requested an improvement to the quality of the sound, and asked for closed captioning to be enabled (I am hearing impaired). There was some initial resistance (I ultimately had to contact the Secretary of State's office), but the town obtained a "blue orb" microphone, and the sound was significantly better. We currently use the microphone and a laptop for our meetings, and have a protocol where all speakers come to the microphone to speak. We also enable the closed captioning automatically on the meetings, to make sure folks don't need to ask to have the captioning available.

One of the things that makes hybrid meetings successful for our community is that people truly have access, and are able to attend a meeting, no matter their situation—whether they are just coming home from work, or making dinner, or have a disability or medical condition that makes attending a physical meeting difficult. Having a hybrid system allows us to invite partners to attend meetings more easily. We are very remote, and people find it difficult to come to meetings, so having this option always available allows us to utilize the resources our partners offer while reducing the impact on our partners' resources and time.

Additionally, all of our three Selectboard members work full time, which means that there is an occasional time when we need to have at least one of us attending remotely, if something pressing comes up. This allows us to more effectively balance work and public service.

We are currently looking at getting an OWL system, to improve the quality of our remote meetings. This will likely cost about \$2,000.

Our general attendance at meetings is about 5 people, which is significantly better than in-person attendance.

I, personally, am very strongly in support of offering hybrid meetings. I think it adds significant value to the participatory process, gives people more opportunities and ways to engage, allows our partners to be able to attend meetings more easily, and provides accessibility in all of the meanings of that word.

Thank you for asking me to attend. I apologize for the audio issues for my testimony.