

H.42

An act relating to temporary alternative procedures for annual municipal meetings and electronic meetings of public bodies

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. ANNUAL MUNICIPAL MEETINGS; ALTERNATIVE  
PROCEDURES FOR 2023 AND 2024

(a) Change of annual meeting date. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, until July 1, 2024, a municipal legislative body may vote to move the date of the municipality's annual meeting to a date later in the same year. In any municipality that moves the date of an annual meeting pursuant to this subsection, municipal officers shall serve until the annual meeting and until successors are chosen.

(b) Authority to apply Australian ballot system. Notwithstanding the provisions of 17 V.S.A. § 2680(a) and 16 V.S.A. § 723 (a) that require the voters of a municipality to vote to apply the provisions of the Australian ballot system to the annual or special meeting of the municipality, until July 1, 2024, any municipality may apply the Australian ballot system to its annual municipal meeting by vote of its legislative body. Any such vote shall also apply the Australian ballot method of voting to any vote that occurs as a result of the annual meeting, such as a budget revote under 17 V.S.A. § 2680(c)(2) or a reconsideration vote pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2661.

(c) Electronic public information hearings. Until July 1, 2024, a municipality may use electronic means, without designating a physical location, to conduct a public informational hearing held pursuant to 17 V.S.A. § 2680(h) in advance of the municipality's annual meeting. A public informational hearing that is held electronically under this subsection shall comply with all of the provisions for electronic meetings under Sec. 2 of this act.

(d) Town of Brattleboro. Until July 1, 2024, the Town of Brattleboro may hold its annual Representative Town Meeting by electronic means.

(e) Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District. Until July 1, 2024, the Board of Supervisors of the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District may vote to adopt the District's annual budget for the ensuing fiscal year.

Sec. 2. OPEN MEETING LAW; TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF  
DESIGNATED PHYSICAL MEETING LOCATION  
REQUIREMENTS

(a) Notwithstanding 1 V.S.A. § 312(a), until July 1, 2024:

(1) a quorum or more of the members of a public body may attend a regular, special, or emergency meeting by electronic or other means without being physically present at a designated meeting location;

(2) the public body shall not be required to designate a physical meeting location where the public may attend; and

(3) the members and staff of the public body shall not be required to be physically present at a designated meeting location.

(b) When the public body meets electronically under subsection (a) of this section, the public body shall:

(1) use technology that permits the attendance of the public through electronic or other means;

(2) allow the public to access the meeting by telephone; and

(3) post information that enables the public to directly access and participate in meetings electronically and include this information in the published agenda for each meeting.

(c) Unless unusual circumstances make it impossible for it to do so, the legislative body of each municipality and each school board shall record its meetings held pursuant to this section.

(d) Notwithstanding 1 V.S.A. § 312(c)(2) and (d)(1)(B), until July 1, 2024, a municipal public body may post any meeting agenda or notice of a special meeting in two designated electronic locations in lieu of the two designated public places in the municipality or in a combination of a designated electronic location and a designated public place. A municipal public body shall post the notice or agenda in or near the municipal clerk's office and shall provide a

copy of each notice or agenda to the newspapers of general circulation for the municipality.

Sec. 3. SUSPENSION OF SCHOOL BUDGET BALLOT LANGUAGE  
REQUIREMENT

Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 563(11)(D), which requires a school board to use specified language for a school budget ballot, the ballot language requirement is suspended during the years 2023 and 2024.

Sec. 4. EXPIRATION OF TEMPORARY AUTHORITY

The authority granted by Secs. 1 and 2 of this act shall expire on July 1, 2024.

Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.