

My name is Tim Arsenault I'm the town clerk on Vernon and am co-chair of the Vermont Municipal Clerk Treasurers association legislative committee. I will mention, for purposes of this discussion, I am the board secretary treasurer of the Windham regional Planning Commission. I am also a 50 year broadcaster and member of the Vermont Association of Broadcasters Hall of fame.

We have opened by necessity, the window for electronic only meetings during the covid era. Whether we like it or not, Covid is still here. I am going to advocate for a mixed solution, one that will make everybody more than a little unhappy.

Regional meetings, and to a lesser extent town boards and other discussions, before covid, had trouble getting a quorum. With Vermont's greying population asking someone in their late 60's and 70's, who may be in poor health, to drive at night to attend a meeting isn't practical. Members of our regional planning commission have not had a problem making a quorum electronically, and they did before covid.

Electronic only is not the answer as we still are a have and have not society in Vermont, both among those with or without service, and with our rapidly greying populace, even those who open computers or who are literate with the technology.

Town Boards around the state, in person or on line, must do a better job of providing the back up information the public wants and needs to know while these boards are meeting.

The state of Vermont, both it's executive and legislative branches, must do a better job in providing access to broadband and even cell service. As a member of the media, I raised this issue with the last three governors, and as you can see, change has been hard.

In short, we need to have the options of meetings electronically, but only as a last resort. We all need to do our jobs better, and thereby encourage our citizenry to be more active citizens on our local, state and national democracy. We can not be content with the status quo, as things will change with or without us, and in our negligence, maybe not for the better.