



Statement on City Council's Special Virtual Meeting held April 7, 2020

(Fredericksburg, VA) April 8, 2020 - Fredericksburg City Council held a Special Virtual Meeting on Tuesday, April 7, 2020, which experienced some technical difficulties. In an effort to provide continuity of government business during the current COVID-19 health crisis, City staff has been working to provide an online meeting platform that is a healthy and safe option for Council, staff and citizens. It must also meet the Governor's COVID-19 directives on social distancing and gatherings of less than ten people.

What went wrong in Tuesday's meeting broadcast?

Sound was difficult to hear in the first approximately 10 minutes of the meeting due to the sound feed being broadcast from the government channel video, not the actual virtual Council meeting. Even though a successful test run had been completed thirty minutes prior, there was an issue at the beginning of the meeting, including during the City Attorney's presentation on item 4(B), the proposed [continuity of government ordinance](#). Council Members could hear each other in the meeting and they were unaware that the sound on the video feed was not functioning correctly. *How is this being handled for future meetings?* Additional tests will be completed ten minutes before meeting start. In the event of a technical issue, Council will be alerted and asked to pause the meeting while the technical issue is resolved. A post on Facebook will also be made to let the public know. The City Attorney has prepared a [written version of her remarks, attaching the notes used to make the presentation](#) at the meeting, for public access through the City website.

Citizens had questions about making public comments. The city's new *Virtual Meeting Protocol* was approved by City Council Tuesday evening, and will be made publicly available no later than close of business Thursday, April 9th. *How is this being handled for future meetings?* Citizens who wish to participate in a meeting's public comment period will be able to send their comments in writing by (1) dropping them in the Deposit Box at City Hall, (2) U.S. Mail, (3) through a form on our website or (4) email to the Clerk of Council. Comments must be received at least one hour in advance of the meeting. The plan is to read these comments out loud during the public comment portion of the City Council meeting. The standard rules apply to public comments: the person must identify himself or herself by name and address, including zip code, limit his or her remarks to 5 minutes or less (read aloud), and address a topic of City business. Public comments will not be accepted on video feeds, including not being permitted on Facebook nor website broadcasts.

Future Virtual Meetings. As we all get used to the "new normal" of doing business virtually during this public health crisis, we greatly appreciate everyone's patience. Instructions on how to attend future virtual meetings of City Council and other Boards and Commissions will be available online at www.Fredericksburgva.gov by Thursday, April 9th. Compliance with Virginia Code and FOIA laws is of utmost importance in this online meeting format. And we encourage all of our citizens to watch for this new information and contact us with any questions. We look forward to your participation in these virtual meetings until such time as we are all able to gather together again in person. Please feel free to contact the City Manager's Office at 540-372-1010 or citymanager@fredericksburgva.gov for more information.