

While acknowledging it is not ideal for members of the Board of Fisheries to remotely participate in public meetings, the covid pandemic demonstrated that it is possible for board members to actively participate remotely. There are various reasons that remote participation by board members is less than ideal, but none more so than the challenge it presents for stakeholders to access remotely participating board members to express their positions during meetings when proposals are being considered by the board. Historically, remote participation was not an option prior to covid. Prior to covid a board member was required to participate in-person, or otherwise miss a meeting, or parts of a meeting, if he or she was ill, injured, or had a schedule conflict that prevented in-person participation, even when the member would otherwise be able to participate if online, remote participation was an available option.

Technology that rapidly evolved during the covid pandemic demonstrated the capability of facilitating remote participation. The following proposal seeks to balance the less than ideal, technological availability of remote participation, against the ideal nature of in-person participation. Since illnesses, injuries and schedule conflicts do occur from time to time for board members, this proposed policy seeks to provide a balance for those occasions where remote participation may be requested from a board member with an awareness towards preventing an abuse, or excessive use, of this policy by limiting the frequency in which a board member may request remote participation to once per cycle.

If this policy is not adopted by the board, or some variation of this policy is not adopted by the board, it is then essential for both the public confidence and board members' confidence that a zero tolerance for remote participation be adopted. Because a case-by-case evaluation of remote participation requests by board members lacks a standardized approach which calls into question the confidence and motives of permitting some remote participation requests while denying others.

Proposed Remote Participation Policy

“A board member may be granted a request of remote participation to a meeting when unable to participate in-person due to an injury, illness, or a schedule conflict, if that board member is able to participate in all, or most, of that board meeting remotely, or partially remotely and partially in-person. Such a request may only be granted to any given board member one time per cycle.”