

**Municipal Alert**  
**June 16, 2021**

**MASSACHUSETTS AMENDS THE OPEN MEETING LAW TO TEMPORARILY  
ALLOW A PUBLIC BODY TO HOLD MEETINGS THROUGH REMOTE  
PARTICIPATION UNTIL APRIL 1, 2022**

Today the Governor signed Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, which authorizes remote participation for all public bodies until April 1, 2022. This temporary measure provides public bodies with the time needed to orderly transition from fully remote meetings to in-person meetings. In response to public demand and interest from cities and towns, the General Court will take this time to determine whether remote participation is here to stay.

The new law includes some of the same elements as the Governor's now expired Executive Order 1, including that any remote access must "provide transparency and permit timely and effective public access to the deliberations of the public body, including, but not limited to, providing public access through telephone, internet, satellite enabled audio or video conferencing or any other technology that enables the public to clearly follow the proceedings of the public body while those activities are occurring."

The law authorizes a public body to allow remote participation by all members, in any meeting, and allows a quorum of the body and the chair to participate via remote participation, without any requirement for physical presence. The law further requires that where a public body elects to hold a meeting by remote means, it must allow any party appearing before the body, and the general public, to also appear or participate through remote means.

Finally, any public meetings which were held by remote means during the short time between the expiration of Executive Order 1 and the passage of this law are ratified and affirmed as if this law was in place at the time.

Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 also includes additional municipal relief items, such as extensions for outdoor dining and take-out alcohol. A further client alert with an overview of all of the relevant provisions will be forthcoming soon.

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*This Client Alert was prepared by Karis North and reviewed with Cindy Amara and Kevin Bresnahan. If you have any questions about this issue, please contact Karis North or the attorney responsible for your account, or call (617) 479-5000.*

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