

BOARD TELECONFERENCING

Background

The Mt. Lebanon School Board recognizes that, from time to time, Board members encounter scheduling conflicts due to matters such as work or family commitments that prevent their physical presence at Board meetings. The Sunshine Act, 65 Pa. C.S. §§ 701*et seq*, has been interpreted by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to permit a member of a governing body of a public agency to participate in public meetings, including deliberations and voting on official actions, by use of a telephone conferencing system.

Objective

It is the objective of this policy to define and specify the circumstances under which Board members who are unable to be physically present at duly convened special or regular board meetings are permitted to participate in Board deliberations and votes by means of teleconferencing.

It is the intent of this policy that the authorized procedures are to be used only in the event of emergencies and other compelling circumstances, which require a Board member to be physically absent from a meeting. Examples include:

1. Personal illness
2. Family emergency
3. Work-related or vacation travel

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, “meeting” shall mean any regular or special meeting of the Board at which deliberations and/or official action take place. Special executive/work sessions and committee meetings are not included within the scope of this policy, but teleconferencing is permitted at those sessions and meetings where a Board member is unable to attend.

A speaker telephone is any telephone instrument or device capable of:

1. Enabling the absent Board member(s) to hear all of the comments of and speak to all those present at the meeting.
2. Enabling all those present at the meeting to hear all of the comments of and speak to such absent Board member(s) contemporaneously.
3. Enabling those Board members who are participating by speaker telephone to hear and speak to each other.

Policy

The procedures for Board member participation by teleconferencing may be used only when a majority (quorum) of the members of the Board is physically present at the meeting. A Board member may participate in Board meetings by means of teleconferences two (2) times in any calendar year; however, this limitation shall be waived automatically unless the Board, by affirmative majority vote, determines that telephonic attendance at additional meetings by such Board member shall not be permitted.

Any Board member who anticipates the necessity of participating in a meeting pursuant to the authorization of this policy shall give reasonable notice to the Board Secretary and Board President so that the necessary arrangements can be made to facilitate the teleconference. The presiding officer of a meeting shall be present in person. If the Board President will not be present in person, the Vice President shall preside at the meeting. If neither the President nor the Vice President will be present in person, the President will, prior to the meeting, designate a presiding officer from among the members of the Board who will be present in person.

At the call to order of the meeting, the presiding officer shall inform all Board members and all others in attendance at the meeting of the identity of the absent Board member(s) who are participating by teleconference. The Board Secretary or a designee shall proceed to establish the telephone connection with the absent Board member(s) at the requested time. Upon the completion of such connection, the presiding officer shall establish the identity of the absent Board member(s) by appropriate inquiry and shall conduct such voice and volume tests to ensure that the absent Board member(s) and all those present or viewing the meeting have adequate contemporaneous voice communications.

The presiding officer or Board Secretary shall then commence the roll call. The physically absent Board member(s), upon responding affirmatively to the call, shall be considered present for the purpose of participating in Board deliberations and voting.

The physically absent Board member(s) may participate in all discussions, deliberations, and votes of the Board as if physically present at the meeting. Where more than one Board member is participating by speaker telephone, he or she shall identify himself or herself when speaking.

If for any reason, the telephone connection with the absent Board member(s) is terminated before the adjournment of the meeting, the meeting shall continue without further participation of the member(s). The termination of the telephone connection prior to the adjournment of the meeting shall not affect the validity of such actions taken by the Board prior to or after the termination of the telephone connection.

Administration Responsibility

It shall be the responsibility of the administration to provide and implement the technology and equipment necessary to permit Board member participation by teleconferences in accordance with the requirements of this policy.

Communication

This policy shall be communicated to:

1. All Administrators
2. The Mt. Lebanon Community

Adopted March 21, 2011
Revised February 22, 2016