



Town of Franklin

Changing dynamics in the municipal
workplace -

In-Person Board & Committee Meetings

Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator
July 28th, 2021
Board of Selectmen Association

www.franklinma.gov

Background



- Population: 35,000. Metrowest.
- Council/Manager form of government. No town meeting.
- 9 Town Councilors - all elected every two years, townwide
 - Other elected boards: School, Planning, Health, Assessors, Town Clerk
 - 17 citizen-driven appointed committees.
- March 2020 - Immediately went to Zoom platform for all boards and committees meetings amidst the pandemic. All remote.
 - Google for internal staff meetings. Town and School use Google/MUNIS, etc.
- June 2020 - First in person meetings we had in 2 months. High School football field Budget hearings - 2 days.



Build for the Future

- April 2020 - nine Town Councilors - many were split on their views of COVID-19. They represented various opinions in the community re: meeting in-person vs online.
- Needed to develop a system to make everyone happy, but stay safe and within CDC protocols, and ultimately, lead by example. Build for the future, not just today.
- July 2020 to the Memorial Day 2021 - Turned the Town Council Chamber into a TV production studio for town boards and committees:
 - Allowed in person: Town Council, staff, presenters, meeting participants only.
 - Not allowed in person: general public.
 - All citizen participation was through Zoom, telephone, live stream, or watch live on local cable access, [Franklin TV](#).
 - Want to speak/comment at a meeting? Zoom, telephone.
 - Want to listen and learn? Zoom, live stream, cable TV.....telephone, too, I guess...
 - Followed all CDC protocols: masks at all times, gathering limits, extensive contact tracing, sign in, temp check, mandatory hand wash at door or no entry for allowed individuals.



Layout

- Seats 6ft.
- Extended Town Council rostrum
- Disinfectant after every meeting.
- Custodians completed in the morning.





Layout

- Town Administrator and staff sit in middle desk
- Superintendent of Schools and staff sit at middle desk.
- Limited staff in person
- Staff always had option in person or thru Zoom.
- All participants had choice
- Again, no general public allowed in.

Layout



- Installed new 4 new TV's monitors
- Zoom is on the TV screens.
- Franklin TV uses Zoom as a customer, no software.
- Audio is through the Chamber speakers.
- Two laptops. One with Zoom. One for Screen Projector (in rear of photo).
- 2 person job:
 - one is in studio,
 - one is my staff is monitoring the laptops with Zoom and for visual presentations.



Layout

- Flows through local cable TV Station Kiosk.
- Audio/Visual is connected through Web presenter by BlackMagic
- Output from Zoom is a simple HDMI cable
- Through the FTV staff, they have the ability to use the COuncil Chamber camera to toggle in between the elected officials, staff, Zoom and screen.
- Uses a 'minus 1" mix audio for all non Zoom audio. Basic cable connections to the audio mixer and PA system in the Chamber.





Layout

- The Chair's View
- The Chair controls the meeting and informs the staff when to mute/kick people out.
- We have had less than a handful of disruptions in 17 months.
- It took the various Chairs of each committee 1-3 meetings to get the hang of things.
- Everything has been trial and error.
- Best practice: set expectations and understand some days things may not work great.



Layout July 2021

- When regulations got relaxed in June, the Town's systems were already accommodating all technologies.
- I just added and moved some chairs.
- The previous 12 months were critical to experimenting, trial and error.
- Had a few technical difficulties.
- The Town has also invested in Owl cameras, but have not used them yet.

The Future



- The current format will continue for the foreseeable future.
 - In person, Zoom, Live stream, live broadcast.
 - Critical to have flexibility and options for all citizens.
 - All demographics have options under the format.
 - We live in an on demand culture.
 - Individualism, choice, accessibility and convenience are always popular.
- Customer Service. Civic engagement increases with choice.
 - Younger families, single parents.
- When regulations were lifted, I just added chairs to the room for citizens to attend meetings in person. We have had two since those regs were lifted and no increase in participants.
- Partner with outside groups. Franklin TV.
- Quick plug: [Franklin TV](https://franklin.tv) is always a resource! Pete Fasciano, Director, 508-541-4118 - info@franklin.tv