

MASSACHUSETTS STATE GRANGE

POLICY for VIRTUAL GRANGE MEETINGS AND VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE ADOPTED AS REVISED: October 15, 2022

Overview:

The virtual attendance policy applies to all Granges in Massachusetts. This policy is meant to cover two circumstances:

- 1) This policy allows members who are unable to physically be present at their Granges' meeting but whom would still like to participate to attend meetings virtually.
- 2) This policy allows Granges to hold completely virtual meetings when physical meetings cannot be held due to weather, emergency situations or government regulations.

This policy is not intended to entirely replace physical meetings and activities of the Grange and Granges should not replace all meetings with virtual meetings. Grange meetings are by design community events and the fellowship and interactions between members and non members is essential for a successful Grange. Allowing virtual meetings is a tool Granges can use to encourage members to stay connected when they are unable to attend physically and a tool to keep the Grange working for the good of their community during difficult times.

Guidelines:

The rights of members attending virtually shall not vary from regular membership, with the exception of secret balloting as described below.

When conducting a meeting virtually, all rules of the Digest of Laws of the National Grange and the Constitution and By-Laws of the Massachusetts State Grange and By-laws of that Grange will apply. Quorum requirements for the meeting must be met, minutes must be taken and votes must be recorded. The minutes and records of the meeting should make note of how many members attended physically and how many members attended virtually.

Virtual attendance will be defined as live attendance where all parties can hear all participants at the same time. For example, two members texting back and forth will not be considered as virtual attendance at a Grange meeting. This may be accomplished through phone or video conferencing.

Members who are not visually present in a meeting may vote by saying "Aye" when those in favor is called for, or "No" when those opposed is called for instead of giving the voting sign. The President may adopt this method for all those voting if desired. In the event the President cannot determine the majority, he/she may call for a role call vote to ensure votes are recorded fairly.

When a vote is taken by written ballot the secrecy of the virtual ballots cannot be guaranteed absolute. It is therefore encouraged that meetings where balloting is expected to occur be held as physical in person meetings, whenever possible. All balloting shall take place as prescribed in the Manual, with the exception of a text message or chat feature of an online meeting platform

will take the place of a paper ballot. The President will appoint a member to receive and count the ballots by text or chat feature. If possible, an independent third party who is not voting could be asked to serve in this role to improve the privacy of the ballot, such as a visiting Deputy, State Officer or a member from another Grange. When the situation occurs that a member is only connected by phone without texting ability, the member could be taken off of speaker temporarily to allow them to communicate their vote verbally to a member appointed by the President who would then cast the ballot for that member.

Any vote can be challenged by any member of the Grange and the vote must be confirmed by the President. In the case of a ballot vote, a challenge to the vote will require members to ballot again in order to protect the secrecy of the ballot.

Any business relating to By-Law changes, significant financial transactions, or real property shall be handled in accordance with National Grange Digest of Laws and shall not be considered virtually, however, in times of emergency a waiver can and must be obtained from the State President to allow a virtual vote on such a topic.

Obligation Ceremony, Welcoming Ceremony, Election of Officers and Installation of Officers should be done by physical attendance, however in times of an emergency they will be allowed to be conducted virtually. Degrees by their nature shall not be conducted virtually.

Resolutions to be forwarded to the Pomona or State Grange may be debated and voted upon by members attending virtually and may be completely adopted during a virtual meeting. A quorum must be present for a resolution to be adopted and forwarded to the Pomona or State Grange. The President and Executive Committee cannot forward a resolution without a proper vote of the Grange.

Granges are responsible for the cost (if any) of the technology being used for virtual attendance.

This policy must be adopted by a Grange in Massachusetts to be considered in effect. **In order for this policy to be in effect for a Grange in Massachusetts, the State President must be notified of its adoption by that Grange.**