



OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Sonoma

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Policy for Disruption of Telephonic or Internet Service During Meetings

1. Background

Senate Bill 707 (2025) amended the Brown Act to require eligible legislative bodies to adopt, on or before July 1, 2026, a policy addressing how the agency will respond to disruptions in telephonic or internet service that prevent members of the public from participating remotely.

2. Purpose

This policy establishes procedures for responding to a disruption in the telephonic or internet services that provide two-way remote public access to meetings of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Water Agency, the Board of Commissioners of the Community Development Commission, the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, County of Sonoma Public Financing Authority, and County of Sonoma Public Financing Corporation (herein referred to as 'the Board of Supervisors'), as required by the Brown Act (Government Code section 54953.4). The policy ensures transparency, public participation, and the continuation of meetings during technological disruptions.

3. Definitions

“Service Disruption” means any failure, outage, or other interruption to the agency’s remote access services that prevents members of the public from participating in a meeting of an eligible legislative body through the remote access service.

“Remote access services” means the two-way telephonic service and/or two-way audiovisual platform used to provide real-time remote public attendance and observation of meetings.

“Two-way audiovisual platform” means an online platform that provides participants with the ability to participate in a meeting via both an interactive video conference and a two-way telephonic service.

“Two-way telephonic service” means a telephone service that does not require internet access and allows participants to dial a telephone number to listen and verbally participate.



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4. Applicability

This policy applies to all open and public meetings of the Board of Supervisors at which remote public participation is required under the Brown Act. Consistent with the Brown Act, this policy shall not apply to the following meetings:

Meetings held to attend a judicial or administrative proceeding to which County of Sonoma is a party.

Meetings held to inspect real or personal property provided that the topic of the meeting is limited to items directly related to the real or personal property.

Meetings held to meet with elected or appointed officials of the United States or the State of California, solely to discuss a legislative or regulatory issue affecting the County of Sonoma and over which the federal or state officials have jurisdiction.

Meetings held to meet in or nearby a facility owned by the County of Sonoma, provided that the topic of the meeting is limited to items directly related to the facility.

Meetings held in an emergency situation pursuant to Government Code section 54956.5.

5. Remote Public Access Generally

When remote public access is required under the Brown Act, the Board of Supervisors shall provide members of the public with an opportunity to attend and participate in the meeting using a two-way audiovisual platform or a two-way telephonic service, provided that adequate telephonic or internet service is operational at the meeting location.

If adequate telephonic or internet service is not operational at the meeting location, the Board of Supervisors shall not be required to provide remote access. If adequate telephonic or internet service is operational for only a portion of the meeting, the Board of Supervisors shall provide remote access during that portion of the meeting.

If a two-way audiovisual platform is used, the Board shall:

Publicly post and provide a call-in option as well; and



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Activate any automatic captioning function that is available in the audiovisual platform.

If a two-way audiovisual platform is not provided, the Board of Supervisors shall provide a two-way telephonic service.

Members of the public participating remotely shall be provided the same opportunity to provide public comment as members of the public attending in person, including the same time allotment.

6. Response to Service Disruption

If the Chair or County Executive Officer becomes aware of a service disruption:

The Chair shall immediately announce the service disruption to the public.

The Chair shall call for a recess of the open session and may convene the legislative body in an authorized closed session, consistent with the Brown Act. The recess shall last for one hour or until service is restored, whichever is earlier.

During the recess, County of Sonoma staff shall make a good faith effort to diagnose and restore the disrupted service.

If the disruption occurred prior to public comment on the Closed Session Calendar, the Chair may take in-person comments and then convene into closed session. If service is restored before an hour passes, the Chair may direct that the regular meeting resumes or choose to continue the Closed Session calendar as needed.

7. Reconvening the Open Session

After the expiration of the hour, if service has not been restored, the Chair of County Executive Officer shall report on the status of staff's efforts to restore remote access services, and the Board of Supervisors may reconvene to:

Adjourn the meeting;

Extend the recess to allow staff more time to make a good faith effort to restore remote access services; or



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Continue the open session portion of the meeting by adopting, by roll call vote, the following or a substantially similar finding:

“The County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors [or other eligible legislative body within the scope of this policy] has made good faith efforts to restore telephonic or internet service in accordance with its adopted policy, and the public interest in continuing the meeting outweighs the public interest in remote public access.”

Upon adoption of the finding, the Board of Supervisors may continue the open session portion of the meeting despite the fact that remote access services have not been restored.

8. Recordkeeping

The Clerk of the Board shall enter a brief statement into the meeting minutes, including:

The nature and time of the service disruption;

The time the meeting was reconvened (if applicable);

Any finding adopted pursuant to Section 7.

9. Review and Updates

This policy may be amended by the Board of Supervisors at a noticed public meeting in open session and may not be placed on the consent calendar.