

# Government of the District of Columbia Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B

## [DRAFT] RESOLUTION #4B-21-0509

### Calling for Legislative Changes and Supports to Allow Hybrid (Virtual and In-Person) Meetings for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions

Adopted May 24, 2021

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B takes note of the following:

- Mayor Muriel Bowser declared a state of emergency and public health emergency related to COVID-19 (coronavirus) on March 11, 2020. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has been meeting virtually since April 2020.
- The DC Code requires Commissioners to be physically present at a public meeting to participate in the meeting, including being counted toward the presence of a quorum and voting on matters before the Commission. [DC Code § 1-309.11\(b\)\(1A\) \(Perm\)](#). Emergency legislation was enacted on March 17, 2020, to allow Commissioners to remotely participate in Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings and “vote on matters before the Commission without being physically present through a teleconference or through digital means identified by the Commission for this purpose” during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) public health emergency. [B23-0718](#), COVID-19 Response Emergency Amendment Act of 2020 (codified at [DC Code § 1-309.11\(b\)\(1B\)](#)).
- Although the District’s Office of the Chief Technology Officer did not initially provide any technological assistance for virtual Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings, in late March, Commissions received a Cisco Webex license as an option for virtual meeting technology.
- While the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and the District’s Office of the Chief Technology Officer provided some support for use of Cisco Webex virtual meeting technology, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has found centralized support for virtual meetings lacking and determined the Commission would benefit from additional support. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B hired an individual to provide technological services, including a Zoom license, and to facilitate the Commission’s virtual meetings.

- Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B held its first virtual regular public meeting in April 2020. The Commission has continued to hold virtual meetings during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) public health emergency. Overall, like many other public bodies, the Commission has seen an increase in the number of meeting attendees. Many residents have expressed appreciation for the ease of joining meetings virtually and have indicated that they have attended more meetings virtually than they would have in person.
- The DC Council [voted](#) on May 18, 2021, to provide the Mayor with the authority to extend the current COVID-19 (coronavirus) public health emergency until July 25 at the latest. The Mayor has extended the public health emergency “for so long as District of Columbia law extends the emergency.” [Mayor’s Order 2021-069](#) (May 17, 2021).
- Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B believes that virtual meetings have increased the inclusivity and accessibility of Commission meetings for both Commissioners and residents and that hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings will provide optimal inclusivity and accessibility as Commissions transition after the end of the declared COVID-19 (coronavirus) public health emergency. See [Letter](#) re Ensuring Adequate Resources for Successful Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (Jan. 25, 2021) (“Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B supports funding necessary to continue a remote option for Commission meetings once the public health emergency ends as a mechanism to increase attendance and accessibility. The Commission is one of many that have seen an increase in the number of meeting attendees since it began virtual meetings in March 2020.”); Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B, [Annual Report 2020](#) (Nov. 23, 2020) (“Once in-person meetings resume, the Commission hopes to continue to offer a virtual option to attend and participate in Commission meetings, among other measures, to continue to improve the inclusivity and accessibility of Commission meetings.”). See also [Letter](#) re Administrative Support and Infrastructure for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (Sept. 24, 2019) (“a Commission’s lack of access to or interest in purchasing technology, including microphones and speakers, audio-visual equipment, and recording devices, can limit the ability of residents to participate in meetings and receive information”).
- Providing a consistent and centralized virtual option for Commissioners and residents as the District transitions from the COVID-19 (coronavirus) public health emergency and as more and more individuals are vaccinated will ease the transition and protect and respect public health concerns. Some Commissioners prefer the option of attending meetings virtually, in part because they have young children, who are not yet eligible for vaccinations, and some Commissioners are immune

compromised and/or care for an immune compromised individual, among other public health concerns. In addition, the need for a virtual option may arise again due to other public health emergencies, natural disasters, or other unforeseen circumstances.

- The public health emergency has demonstrated that many Commissioners and residents can more easily attend meetings virtually. Individuals who care for children or other family members, individuals with limited mobility, individuals with compromised immune systems, and individuals who work multiple jobs, among others, benefit from the flexibility of being able to attend virtual meetings. As Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has stated, “Accessibility and availability for participation and comment for all residents of a Commission area is a core function of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions,” and allowing virtual participation greatly assists that function. [Resolution 4B-19-0403](#), Supporting Implicit and Unconscious Bias Training and Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Initiatives for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (Apr. 22, 2019).
- Furthermore, hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings will ensure any DC Jail resident who serves as the Commissioner for Single Member District 7F07 can participate in Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings by attending virtually, as well as provide flexibility for Commissioners and residents serving in Single Member Districts that include universities. *See generally* [Resolution 4B-21-0104](#), Calling for Fair and Equitable Elections Procedures and Improved Mechanisms to Fill Advisory Neighborhood Commission Vacancies (Jan. 25, 2021).
- Hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings will require specific centralized infrastructure and support, including continued Cisco Webex and/or other licenses for virtual meeting platforms, as well as additional audio-visual supports and reliable Internet at public meeting locations. Many of these needs are not new, but will require additional consideration, preparation, and funding. *See* [Letter](#) re Ensuring Adequate Resources for Successful Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (Jan. 25, 2021) (calling for improved centralized support for technology services from the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions); [Letter](#) re Administrative Support and Infrastructure for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (Sept. 24, 2019) (requesting “centralized technology services necessary for meeting accessibility and communication of information to residents, including microphones and speakers, audio-visual equipment (e.g., projector and screen), and recording services (with captioning)”).
- While Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B understands that every Commission is different and may have different needs, the Commission believes that centralized provision of supports necessary for hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings is essential to ensure efficient, effective,

and responsive Commissions across the city. Commissions across the city receive very different amounts of funding, as that funding is tied to the number of residents represented by the Commission. As noted in the Advisory Neighborhood Commission Handbook (2021-2022): “The amount of money that ANCs receive ... varies greatly from one ANC to the next.” Expecting Commissions to fund support necessary for hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings via their allotment and not via a centralized fund will lead to an inequity of services across the District. [Letter](#) re Administrative Support and Infrastructure for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (Sept. 24, 2019) (“a Commission’s lack of access to or interest in purchasing technology, including microphones and speakers, audio-visual equipment, and recording devices, can limit the ability of residents to participate in meetings and receive information”).

- The Technical Support and Assistance Fund for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions includes funding for “[e]nsuring that Advisory Neighborhood Commissions have access to remote meeting technologies necessary for their operations” and “[p]roviding or procuring audio-visual technology and services to support Advisory Neighborhood Commissions,” which can be used for the purposes of hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings. [DC Code § 1-309.13a\(c\)\(3\),\(4\)](#).

## **RESOLVED:**

- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the DC Council, in coordination with the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, to enact legislation permitting continuation of virtual participation by Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners in Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings via hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings for Commissions.
- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the DC Council, in coordination with the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, to include in such legislation an adequate transition period where Commissions are allowed to continue meeting virtually (without an in-person option) as the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and Commissions prepare for hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings for Commissions.
- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls of the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions to administer the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions Technical Support and Assistance Fund, [DC Code § 1-309.13a\(c\)\(3\),\(4\)](#), to provide funding for “[e]nsuring that Advisory Neighborhood Commissions have access to remote meeting technologies necessary for their operations” and “[p]roviding or procuring audio-visual technology and services to support Advisory Neighborhood

Commissions” necessary for hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings for Commissions.

- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions to provide or contract for the centralized provision of equipment, services, and other necessary supports for successful hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. Such supports include continued Cisco Webex and/or other licenses for virtual meeting platforms; mobile hotspots or other high-speed, reliable Internet; and monitors, projectors, speakers, headsets, and other audio-visual equipment.

**FURTHER RESOLVED:**

That the Commission designates Commissioner Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02 to represent the Commission in all matters relating to this Resolution.

**FURTHER RESOLVED:**

That, in the event the designated representative Commissioner cannot carry out their representative duties for any reason, the Commission authorizes the Chair to designate another Commissioner to represent the Commission in all matters relating to this Resolution.

**FURTHER RESOLVED:**

That, consistent with DC Code § 1-309, only actions of the full Commission voting in a properly noticed public meeting have standing and carry great weight. The actions, positions, and opinions of individual commissioners, insofar as they may be contradictory to or otherwise inconsistent with the expressed position of the full Commission in a properly adopted resolution or letter, have no standing and cannot be considered as in any way associated with the Commission.

**ADOPTED** by voice vote at a regular public meeting (notice of which was properly given, and at which a quorum of **[NUMBER]** members was present) on May 24, 2021, by a vote of **X** yes, **X** no, **X** abstentions.