

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



[DRAFT] RESOLUTION #4B-23-0501

**Supporting & Providing Recommendations on B25-0257,
Hybrid Meeting Accessibility Act of 2023, to Ensure Accessibility & Inclusivity
Adopted May 22, 2023**

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B (Commission) takes note of the following:

- The COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic shifted government meetings – including Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings – to a virtual environment to mitigate the spread of the virus, promote the health and safety of residents, and maintain public engagement on critical issues impacting the community. Despite some initial challenges associated with a wholesale shift in operations from in-person to virtual hearings, government entities have operated successfully and realized [many benefits](#) over several years. As District government operations undergo another transition period, DC government entities must be intentional in supporting ongoing virtual options to continue to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of government meetings, including Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings.
- Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B responded quickly to Mayor Muriel Bowser’s March 11, 2020, declaration of a state of emergency and public health emergency related to COVID-19 and began holding virtual meetings in April 2020. The Commission made this transition with little-to-no centralized support. Although Commissions received a Cisco Webex license and minimal training as an option for virtual meeting technology, the Commission found WebEx less user friendly than other meeting technology options. Additionally, other Commissions that chose to use the centrally-provided WebEx license had the licenses quietly discontinued without advance notice to Commissioners. The lack of continuity and unclear communications reinforced a general sense that Commissions had been left to fend for themselves in transitioning to virtual meetings.

- Despite the lack of centralized support to make the transition from in-person to virtual meetings, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B successfully implemented virtual meetings and has been meeting virtually since April 2020. Since shifting from in-person to virtual meetings, the Commission has experienced an overall increase in the number of meeting attendees, the diversity of participants, and community engagement. With virtual meetings, residents, agency representatives, presenters, and Commissioners can remotely listen to presentations and discussion, ask questions, and remain connected. Virtual meetings have thereby improved the inclusivity and accessibility of Commission meetings for both Commissioners and residents, more fully satisfying the statutory obligations to “hear the views of residents ... on problems or issues of concern,” adequately consider community views, “ensure the broadest dissemination of information,” and “involve all segments of the Commission population in [Commission] deliberations regardless of race, sex, age, voting status, religion, economic status, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.” [D.C. Code §§ 1-309.11\(b\)\(3\), \(f\)](#).
- Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has continually advocated for stronger centralized supports for virtual meetings and a continued virtual option for Commission meetings, among other measures, to continue to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of Commission meetings:
 - [Resolution 4B-23-0102](#), Highlighting History of Advocacy for and Requesting Stronger Centralized Resources for Successful Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (Jan. 23, 2023) (“Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B ... calls for a renewed focus on adequately funding and supporting the implementation of hybrid Commission meetings.”);
 - Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B, [Annual Report 2022](#) (Nov. 28, 2022) (“While there have been discussions about the technological support needed for hybrid meetings, including indications that there would be technology kits provided to Commissions for such meetings, there have been no formal communications, advice, or support for hybrid meetings from the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. The Commission urges prompt action, as well as the necessary centralized support, to successfully offer such meetings. It would be a shame to lose the benefits of a virtual option when Commissions have seen the value of offering that option.”);
 - Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B, [Annual Report 2021](#) (Nov. 22, 2021) (“Overall, the Commission saw an increase in the number of meeting attendees and has advocated – along with over 100 Commissioners across the District – for a continued virtual option to attend and participate in Commission meetings, among

other measures, to continue to improve the inclusivity and accessibility of Commission meetings.”);

- [Resolution 4B-21-0703](#), Requesting Centralized Funding and Support for Advisory Neighborhood Commission Technology and Printing Needs (July 26, 2021) (“Meeting technology is particularly crucial to the Commission’s efforts to offer hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings.”);
- [Resolution 4B-21-0601](#), Calling for Virtual Testimony Option for DC Government Hearings (June 28, 2021) (“Put plainly: more people participate when government hearings meet them where they are.”);
- [Citywide Letter](#) to the DC Council, Calling for Hybrid (Virtual and In-Person) Meetings for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (June 10, 2021) (signed by all Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B Commissioners) (“Virtual meetings have improved the inclusivity and accessibility of Commission meetings for both Commissioners and residents, more fully satisfying our statutory obligations to ‘hear the views of residents ... on problems or issues of concern,’ adequately consider community views, ‘ensure the broadest dissemination of information,’ and ‘involve all segments of the Commission population in [Commission] deliberations regardless of race, sex, age, voting status, religion, economic status, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.’ [D.C. Code §§ 1-309.11\(b\)\(3\), \(f\).](#)”);
- Testimony by Commissioner Erin Palmer (4B02) before the DC Council’s Committee on Government Operations and Facilities, Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commission’s Budget Oversight Hearing (June 4, 2021) (despite the existence of a [Technical Support and Assistance Fund](#) for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, administered by the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, which 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,’ there has been no communications from or discussion with the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions regarding those services, which are crucial and time sensitive as we transition out of the public health emergency and begin to meet in person, or ideally via hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings.”);
- [Resolution 4B-21-0509](#), Calling for Legislative Revisions and Supports to Allow Hybrid (Virtual and In-Person) Meetings for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (May 24, 2021) (“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.”);

- [Letter](#) regarding 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.”).
- Advisory Neighborhood Commissions are slowly transitioning to hybrid Commission meetings, once again with limited centralized support. While there have been indications that there would be technology kits provided to Commissions for such meetings, there have been no formal communications, advice, or support for hybrid meetings. The lack of continuity and unclear communications have reinforced a general sense that Commissions have been left to fend for themselves, with some Commissions holding virtual-only meetings, some Commissions attempting hybrid meetings (with hybrid technology infrastructure varying significantly across Commissions), and some Commissions reverting to in-person meetings only and losing the benefits of a virtual option.
- Venues for Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings vary greatly in their suitability for hybrid meetings – even among Commissions that meet in solely District government-owned facilities. Failure by the District government to provision adequate physical space for Commissions furthers inequities among Commissions. See [Letter](#) regarding Ensuring Adequate Resources for Successful Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (Jan. 25, 2021). Additionally, some District agencies (such as District of Columbia Public Schools) disfavor Commissions in renting their spaces and charge Commissions [higher for-profit business rates](#).
- Councilmember Janeese Lewis George (Ward 4), Brianne K. Nadeau (Ward 1), Robert C. White, Jr. (At-Large), and Brooke Pinto (Ward 2)

introduced [B25-0257](#), the Hybrid Meeting Accessibility Act of 2023, on April 25, 2023. The proposed legislation seeks to make it easier for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions to hold hybrid meetings, ensure equitable access, and require the Office of the Chief Technology Officer develop a plan to acquire and implement hybrid meeting technology within each of the District's 46 Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. The proposed legislation requires installation of this hybrid meeting infrastructure "no later than 45 to 225 days from the establishment of this act."

- Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B continues to recognize the importance of hybrid technology infrastructure that enables hybrid meeting capabilities and the benefits that reliable and accessible hybrid meeting technology could bring to communities in terms of heightened engagement in public meetings. As the Commission 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). A virtual option makes it easier for people who care for young children or other family members, people who are disabled, unhoused residents, and people who have extended work schedules or jobs that are not 9-to-5 work schedules to participate.
- Similarly, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B continues to recognize the importance of hybrid technology infrastructure to ensure diversity and inclusion for Commissioners themselves. Similar to remote work, [a virtual option](#) for volunteer Commissioners "is a major step toward creating more inclusive organizations," particularly for caregivers (mostly women), people with disabilities, and people facing economic housing limitations. [Virtual options](#) have "enabled women to engage in caregiving while also maintaining some participation in the workforce. And we can also think of the implications for retention.... For persons of colour, [virtual options] means that there are [fewer opportunities for them to experience microaggressions](#) in the workplace. And so, they actually feel greater belonging, and more of a sense of inclusion, while working remotely." More individuals might consider running and serving for Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner where participation is more accessible and inclusive – an extremely important need in light of the recent dramatic decline in women serving as Commissioners, for example. Increased accessibility and inclusivity reduce the barriers to entry, which are already high due to the lack of centralized support for Commissioners.
- A return to in-person meetings without a virtual option will exclude individuals and limit participation. Hybrid meeting technology must be robust and implemented well to allow Advisory Neighborhood

Commissions to maximize use of both an in-person and virtual option for meeting participation and engagement.

RESOLVED:

- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B fully supports [B25-0257](#), the Hybrid Meeting Accessibility Act of 2023, to enable hybrid Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings and calls on the DC Council's Committee on Public Works and Operations to promptly schedule a public hearing at which Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners can provide feedback on the proposed legislation and Commission needs. In addition, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B encourages the DC Council to promptly consider and approve the proposed legislation.
- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the DC Council's Committee on Public Works and Operations to consider strengthening [B25-0257](#), the Hybrid Meeting Accessibility Act of 2023, to:
 - expressly state that hybrid meeting technology must allow residents, agency representatives, presenters, and Commissioners a virtual participation option for Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings;
 - include minimum requirements for hybrid meeting technology to ensure consistency and quality across Advisory Neighborhood Commissions;
 - consider and possibly clarify the role of previously promised hybrid technology kits and whether Advisory Neighborhood Commissions will need to acquire any technology for themselves;
 - clarify whether Commissioners themselves will use the hybrid meeting technology or whether specialized assistance will be needed and provided;
 - mandate training by and guidance from the Office of the Chief Technology Officer for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions in the use of hybrid meeting infrastructure, as well as engaging with presenters and the public for participation in hybrid meetings;
 - consider equity in the implementation of the proposed legislation to ensure Commissioners and residents receive the support they need to use and take advantage of hybrid meeting infrastructure;
 - require the Office of the Chief Technology Officer to benchmark analogous implementations of hybrid meeting technologies to inform the acquisition and implementation approach under this proposed legislation; and

- include the DC State Board of Education, and possibly other entities, for consideration for priority use of public meeting rooms with hybrid meeting infrastructure.
- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the DC Council, including the Committee on Public Works and Operations, to communicate openly and coordinate with the Mayor and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer to ensure timely and successful implementation of hybrid meeting infrastructure in each Advisory Neighborhood Commission, particularly considering that a similar statutory provision requiring District-provided office space for Commissions has never been implemented fully or successfully. See [DC Code § 1 309.13\(q\)](#) (“[T]he Mayor shall provide [Commissions] with suitable office space in a District-owned or leased building.”).

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Commission designates Commissioner Alison Brooks, ANC 4B08, Commissioner Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02, Commissioner Kevin Gilligan, ANC 4B05, and Commissioner Evan Yeats, ANC 4B04 to represent the Commission in all matters relating to this Resolution.

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That, in the event the designated representative Commissioners cannot carry out their representative duties for any reason, the Commission authorizes the Chair to designate another Commissioner to represent the Commission in all matter 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 __ members was present) on May 22, 2023, by a vote of _ yes, _ no, _ abstentions.