

## **Presiding Officer Statement Regarding Holding Meetings via Telephone or Other Electronic Means**

As Board Chair and Presiding Officer for Castle Rock Township (“Town”), I find as follows:

- a. The spread of COVID-19 within the United States has raised serious public health concerns and resulted in a great deal of uncertainty since much remains unknown about the virus and how it spreads.
- b. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization determined the outbreak constitutes a pandemic. On March 13, 2020, President Donald Trump declared a national state of emergency as a result of the pandemic.
- c. On March 13, 2020, Governor Tim Walz declared a state of peacetime emergency to address the coronavirus pandemic in the State of Minnesota. The Governor’s declaration triggered activation of Dakota County’s emergency management plan and enabled Dakota County to exercise its emergency powers as needed to respond to the emergency. On March 25, 2020, Governor Tim Walz issued Executive Order 20-20, Directing Minnesotans to stay at home through April 10, 2020. This order prohibits township boards to conduct in-person meetings.
- d. The Minnesota Department of Health has provided specific guidance encouraging the limiting of events that do not allow social distancing of six feet per person, which is not practical to achieve in the Town Hall.
- e. On March 16, 2020, President Donald Trump announced additional guidelines meant to slow the spread of COVID-19, including avoiding gatherings of people in groups of more than ten. Meetings of the Town’s Board of Supervisors (“Town Board”) are routinely attended by more than ten people.
- f. Minnesota Statutes, section 13D.021 authorizes townships to meet by telephone or other electronic means in the case of a health pandemic or when an emergency has been declared if the presiding officer, chief legal counsel, or chief administrative officer determines meeting in person is not practical or prudent. The statute also allows these officers to determine it is not feasible to require any members of the Town Board or staff to be present in the Town Hall during a meeting.
- g. Given the uncertainties associated with COVID-19 and its spread, conducting in-person Town Board meetings is not practical or prudent, and it is not feasible to require any Town Board member or staff to be present in the Town Hall during the meetings. The Town’s goal is to slow the spread of COVID-19 within the Town and holding meetings

via telephone and electronic means allows the Town to accomplish this goal while still conducting the Town's business.

Based on the above findings, I hereby determine and state as follows:

1. Until this statement is terminated due to the end of the pandemic or the Governor's emergency declaration, Town Board meetings shall be conducted by telephone or other electronic means in a manner satisfying the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 13D.021.
2. The Town Hall will not be open to the public to attend the meetings.
3. Town Board members and the chief legal counsel are not required to be present in the meeting room during meetings.
4. Before each meeting, notice will be provided regarding how the public may listen to or view meetings as they are being conducted.
5. All votes occurring at the meetings shall be conducted by roll call.

Dated this the 29th day of March 2020.

  
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Kelly K Elvestad, Castle Rock Township Chairman