

**TOWNSHIP OF CRANFORD
CRANFORD, NEW JERSEY**

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-105

**ESTABLISHING REMOTE MEETING PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS
DURING DECLARED STATES OF EMERGENCY**

WHEREAS, on March 9, 2020, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 103 declaring a state of emergency as a result of the coronavirus disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) pandemic; and

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2020, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 104, which announced aggressive social distancing measures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which included encouraging employees to tele-work if feasible and limiting large social gatherings and in-person meetings such as those conducted by local government entities; and

WHEREAS, local and county government entities, such as the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford, has and may continue to conduct public meetings and hearings during the COVID-19 pandemic remotely so as to continue the effective administration of government and to enable the general public to continue to participate in government decision making without unduly compromising public health, safety, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) has promulgated emergency regulations, codified at N.J.A.C. 5:39-1.1 to -1.7 (the “DLGS Regulations”), which establish standard protocols for remote public meetings held by local government entities during a Governor-declared public health emergency, state of emergency or state of local disaster emergency, including minimum procedures to be followed to provide reasonable notice and to allow public input; and

WHEREAS, on September 24, 2020, DLGS issued Local Finance Notice 2020-21, expanding on the DLGS Regulations; and

WHEREAS, to allow the Township Committee to continue to conduct public business, and to allow the public to attend Township Committee meetings remotely, consistent with and in compliance with Executive Order 104, the OPMA, and N.J.A.C. 5:39-1.1 to 1.7, the Township Committee wishes to establish standard protocols for remote public meetings as set forth in this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, the Township Committee has decided to adopt the following standard protocols and procedures for conducting remote public meetings, including minimum procedures to be followed to provide reasonable notice and to allow public input;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford, that:

1. The following procedures and requirements are hereby adopted for the Township Committee's remote meetings:
 - (a) The Township Committee's public notice of each meeting conducted remotely shall contain the dial-in conference number and/or web address necessary for members of the public to participate in and access the meeting remotely. The Township Committee presently uses Google Meet video conferencing to conduct its remote public meetings, which accommodates at least fifty (50) public participants in addition to those required to conduct the meeting. Members of the public wishing to comment during the public portion of meetings or during a public hearing may press the "Raise Hand" button on Google Meet or dial *3 to raise their hand. A representative of the Township Committee ("Facilitator") will keep members of the public muted, except when they are selected to speak during the public portion of the meeting or during any public hearing. Members of the public may also mute and unmute themselves by pressing the microphone button on Google Meet or pressing *6 on the telephone keypad or by any other method as may be suggested that may mute or unmute themselves. Members of the public may also discontinue their video through the "Google Meet" platform.
 - (b) Members of the public may submit written comments in advance of a meeting, which will be read during the public portion of the meeting. Written public comments submitted prior to the meeting must identify the name and address of the commenter. No anonymous comments will be accepted. Written comments may be submitted via e-mail with the subject line "Public Comment-Township of Cranford Township Committee-Meeting Date of _____" to the Clerk of the Township Committee, Patricia Donahue at clerk@cranfordnj.org or by mail addressed to: Patricia Donahue, Municipal Clerk, Township of Cranford, 8 Springfield Avenue, Cranford, NJ 07016. E-mailed comments must be received at least eight (8) hours prior to the meeting. Mailed comments must be received by 12:00 p.m. the day before the meeting.
 - (c) Public comments submitted prior to the meeting shall be read aloud by an authorized representative of the Township Committee during the public meeting in a matter audible to all meeting participants. Written comments received prior to the meeting will be read after all those members of the public attending the meeting wishing to provide comment have had the opportunity to do so. The same time limit of five (5) minutes shall apply to each of the public comments received prior to the meeting. Each written comment shall be read from the beginning, until the time limit is reached. If duplicative written comments are received, the name of each commenter will be noted for the record, and the contents may be summarized.
 - (d) The Township Committee will not accept comments made through the Google Meet "chat" feature during remote public meetings.
 - (e) The agenda for the meeting will be available on the Township website, <https://www.cranfordnj.org/node/70/agenda>, prior to the meeting.
 - (f) If any meeting includes a public hearing all material that will be considered by the

Township Committee at the public hearing shall be posted on the Township Committee's website in a conspicuous location or as otherwise required by law. If sworn testimony is to be taken during the public hearing, it shall be broadcast by both video and audio. Written comments, as set forth within this resolution, will be accepted for such public hearings.

(g) Immediately after calling the meeting to order, the designated meeting Facilitator shall ensure that the Google Meet link and dial-in number are working. If the Google Meet link or dial-in number are not working, and cannot be returned to working order in a reasonable period of time the meeting shall be adjourned to another time.

(h) The Facilitator shall announce at the beginning of the remote public meeting the procedures and requirements for making public comment. The Facilitator will also explain that members of the public who are not speaking must mute themselves by pressing the microphone button on Google Meet or by pressing *6 on the telephone keypad or by another method as may be suggested by the Facilitator and may un-mute themselves by pressing the microphone button on Google Meet or by pressing *6 on the telephone keypad, a second time or by another method as may be suggested by the Facilitator.

(i) In the event the meeting is being recorded, the Facilitator will advise the public at the beginning of the meeting.

(j) If any member of the public is attending remotely, he/she will be provided an opportunity to provide public comment of no greater than five (5) minutes (unless an alternative time limit is stated at the beginning of the public comment portion of the meeting at the sole discretion of the Mayor) in duration during the public comment portion of the meeting during the time in the meeting set forth on the agenda (this applies equally to written public comments submitted via email or through the mail). The designated meeting Facilitator will ask whether any member of the public has a comment. Members of the public wishing to comment during the public portion of meetings or during a public hearing may press the "Raise Hand" button on Google Meet or dial *3 to raise their hand. The Facilitator will address members of the public by the name that is assigned by Google Meet, i.e., such as "Caller 1". The Facilitator will need to unmute the caller so they may then announce themselves. The commenter may then unmute themselves by pressing the microphone button on Google Meet or by pressing *6 on the telephone keypad or any other method as may be suggested. Commenters must state their name and address for the record. At the conclusion of the comments, the commenter will be muted by the Facilitator. Once all members of the public who wish to make comment have been heard and all written comments have been read, any Township Committee member may address any comments made.

(k) If any member of the public is attending remotely, and a closed session is called by the Township Committee as permitted by the OPMA, a separate call-in number or other electronic means of limiting remote participation shall be available so only the Township Committee and other persons needed for the closed session may participate.

The Clerk of the Township Committee shall clearly state at what point in the agenda the closed session will occur, the reasons for the closed session, the projected length of the closed session, whether formal action will be taken on any matter after the closed session, and that the public will not be able to hear the Township Committee or provide comment during the closed session. The Township Committee shall return to the public meeting following closed session to adjourn the meeting or take other action as necessary.

(l) Any member of the public who is attending remotely must participate in the meeting with appropriate decorum and act in a civil manner. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. The Township Committee reserves the right to exclude those members of the public who display conduct or make comments that are disruptive, which includes but is not limited to sustained inappropriate behaviors such as, shouting, interruption, or the use of profanity. Members of the public engaged in such conduct will receive a warning, and if the conduct continues, the person will be muted and his or her comments deemed concluded. Should the commenter remain disruptive, he or she shall be removed from video and/or removed altogether from the meeting.

(m) Members of the public may also be immediately, and without warning, muted, removed from video and/or removed from the meeting altogether for conduct or comments that are harassing, demeaning, threatening, and/or offensive to any person's race, gender, color, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and disability (list is representative, not exclusive).

(n) The Township Committee, in its discretion, may change the technology for conducting remote public meetings from Google Meet web conferencing to an alternate acceptable form of audio/video-conferencing technology, which accommodates at least fifty (50) public participants in addition to those required to conduct the meeting.

2. Any prior ordinance or resolution controlling the decorum of the Township Committee's meetings continue to be in effect unless directly contradictory to the provisions in this Resolution.

Certified to be a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford at a meeting held January 12, 2021.

Patricia Donahue, RMC
Township Clerk

Dated: _____