



Vision Paper #4: Making Rotary Meetings Safe: In-Person & Online Format Options

The 'New Normal'

Our Rotary goal, simply stated, is to continue to engage members, prospects and our communities in discussions and projects that both further Rotary's mission and provide us the opportunity to realize 'Service above Self'. Pre-Covid-19, this has been accomplished largely via face-to-face meetings and large gatherings. Much of this came to a screeching halt once Maryland and the District of Columbia's stay-at-home orders were put into place.

In-Person Meetings

When the time comes for us to meet in-person again, which will likely be sooner than later, these online meetings will need to adhere to the 'new normal'. While your Club's Board of Directors is doing their best to ensure everyone's safety, they must follow the guidance coming from the Maryland Governor, your County Executive, the Mayor of DC, and/or the owners of your meeting venue. For face-to-face meetings to resume, all parties must agree on the rules for this new normal. Here are some considerations you may want to discuss with your Club members as you chart the course for your return to in-person meetings:

1) Safety of your Meeting

- **Avoid Choke Points:** Consider the entry and exit of your meeting venue; these tend to be congested areas. Have your greeter(s) moving folks out of this area as soon as they enter and figure out a way to stagger the exit of meeting participants.
- **Bring Lots of Hand Sanitizer:** Bring a large bottle with a dispenser or multiple smaller bottles of hand sanitizer and place them in convenient locations throughout your meeting venue.

2) Venue Set-Up

- **Members Comfort:** Discuss amongst your club if members are comfortable resuming in-person meetings. Consider that your current location may be closed but that does not mean you cannot meet in-person. Change is difficult but this might be a time for change... temporary or permanent.
- **Meeting Space:** Once your meeting venue opens, consider the space you currently use. Can the venue remove one chair between each Rotarian attending the meeting to ensure proper social distancing? If not, what can you do, e.g., can you remain in the same restaurant but gather in a different room? Do you need to consider breaking your Club into different meeting groups? Or alternating groups to meet on different weeks such that in any given week, ½ of their members attend the meeting face-to-face while the other ½ participate via an online. Or consider changing your venue for a different venue?

- **Role of Speakers:** Speakers need to know your meeting set-up prior to accepting your invitation to speak. Though speakers are important to Club meetings, you might want to consider holding meetings without formal speakers because, for example, outdoor gatherings may make this challenging. Instead, consider having members share great vacation experiences or their hobbies. Consider holding your book club or movie club at your Rotary meeting. Perhaps save speakers for Zoom meetings and if you do meet outdoors, be sure the speakers are comfortable knowing they may not be able to show a PowerPoint presentation. If you opt for meetings at a venue which accommodates socially distancing requirements, you will need to consider if all meeting participants are able to view the speaker and his/her PowerPoint from all points in the meeting venue.

3) *Remain Flexible & Creative*

- **Can You Meet Outdoors?** Consider outdoor space, which may be your best option since the weather at this time is conducive to this. Remember that in any outdoor setting, 6-foot distance is essential.
- **How Will You Include All Members?** How will you include members who cannot attend in-person meetings? Will you, for example, hold a Zoom meeting once a month and forgo an in-person meeting that week? Will you offer Zoom access during all in-person meetings? If you Zoom during in-person meetings, maybe consider teaming a Zoom participant and an in-person participant so that those on Zoom feel more included and are better able to participate in the meeting.
- **Consider alternative ways to meet:** Your breakfast meeting can temporarily become a coffee gathering. Your lunch meeting can temporarily become a 'bring your own brown-bag lunch' meeting in a park. Your dinner meeting can temporarily become a 'grab a drink' at an outdoor cafe.

Online Meetings

Regardless of when face-to-face meetings re-commence, the D7620 Covid-19 Survey confirmed most Rotary Clubs will continue to hold online meetings even when they can resume face-to-face meetings and large gatherings. The growth in D7620 Rotary Club online meetings has been phenomenal since Maryland and the District of Columbia's stay-at-home orders. At first, many Clubs were exploring the unknown, but soon after became pleasantly surprised by the number of members that joined their online meetings (in many cases, Club members showed up they had not been seen in months). Some Clubs are reporting more members are participating in online meetings than in-person meetings in the past. Simply said, online meetings have proven to be a great way to keep members informed, share future plans, address issues of concern regarding fundraising, and maintain the comradery that our members cherish. In the blink of an eye, Clubs are now holding successful weekly or bi-monthly online Club meetings, happy hours, Trivia events, Murder Mystery parties, creative fundraisers and more.

Online Meeting Etiquette

Polite online behavior is something we all strive to achieve, and this holds true for online meetings. Here are 10 tips worth considering when implementing your online meetings:

#	Virtual Meeting Etiquette
1	Use the video option when possible
2	Dress appropriately
3	Stage your video area
4	More light is better
5	Look into the camera
6	Stay focused on the meeting – avoid multi-tasking
7	Mute your microphone when not speaking
8	Be mindful of background noise and activity
9	Open and close the meeting on time
10	Send out an agenda in advance of the meeting

Online Technology Platforms

There are several online meeting platforms to choose from. Most Cubs currently hold their online meetings using the Zoom or the Go-To-Meeting platforms. A big concern holding meetings online is the meeting being hacked or ‘bombed’. Here is what happens: during your meeting, someone hacks in and displays less-than-desirable photos or propaganda. This happened recently to the Carroll Creek Rotary Club while close to 140 members were participating in the meeting forcing the Club to shut down the meeting. While the Club did a great job recovering from this incident, we all have learned from this experience. One best practice is to ‘lock’ your meeting a few minutes after it starts so no one else can join the meeting. If you have members that run late and try to join the meeting, unfortunately under this scenario they will not be able to join. Another best practice, which we are seeing a lot more of, is to oblige members and prospects to register for each meeting, which triggers an email to the member or prospect containing the meeting agenda and the meeting invitation. Another good practice is to display ‘Rules of Meeting Etiquette’ while people are signing into the online meeting; everyone needs a gently reminder from time to time.

Online Platform Offerings & Pricing

Those that would label themselves ‘technology challenged’ have been impressed by how easy it is to tackle joining a virtual meeting by following a simple set of instructions. In fact, online meetings have become a new normal for many. Here is a list containing an overview of leading online software packages.

Software	Plan	List Prices (unless noted otherwise)	Comments
Zoom.com	Basic	Free	Up to 100 participants, 1 to 1 meeting, lasting up to 40 minutes
	Pro	If billed monthly, \$14.99 per host If billed annually, \$149.90 per host	Up to 100 participants
	Business	\$19.99 per host per month	Up to 300 participants
	Enterprise	\$19.99 per host per month	Up to 500+ participants
			Save 20% with code “ZoomRotary”
Gotomeeting.com	Basic	\$14.00 per month (billed annually at \$171)	Host 10 participants

Software	Plan	List Prices (unless noted otherwise)	Comments
	Pro	\$29 per month (billed annually at \$348)	Unlimited meetings with up to 150 participants, along with recording, mobile apps and more
TheFreeConference .com	Basic	Free	Online voice and screen share only
Google Meet	Basic	Free	Gmail video calls up to 100 participants and lasting 60 minutes (time limit starts 9/30/2020)
G Suite	Business	\$12 a month per user	Meet with up to 50 people at once
	Enterprise	\$25 a month per user	Meet with up to 100 people at once

Conclusion

As we adjust and adapt to the new normal, we can learn from each other and from best practices coming from other Rotary Clubs as Rotary Connect the World. How best to adjust and adapt is very much a ‘work in progress’ since we still have a way to go to figure it all out. We encourage you to engage Club members to share their ideas on how best to organize and implement safe and successful future meetings. By doing this now, your Club will be better prepared for a possible second wave of the Covid-19 virus that could take place prior to an effective vaccine or medicine. With your help and creativity, along with today’s technology and our ability to work together, Rotarians will successfully welcome the new normal and continue our journey to provide meaningful Service Above Self.

Let us end this Vision Paper by putting Covid-19 into perspective, since there have been worse circumstances. Covid-19 does not come close to the devastation of the Black Plague (1346-53). This plague killed indiscriminately – young and old, rich and poor – but especially in cities and among groups who had close contact with the sick. Entire monasteries filled with friars were wiped out. Europe lost most of its doctors. In the countryside, whole villages were abandoned. To learn more, click [here](#) to read ‘The Black Death: The Greatest Catastrophe Ever’, by [Ole Benedictow](#).

Questions/Comments

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Rotary District 7620 Vision Papers

All 6 Vision Papers and a recording of their follow-on webinars are available for downloading on the D7620 website by clicking [here](#).