

Natural Heritage Trust  
Board Member Videoconferencing Procedure  
Effective: January 20, 2023

In compliance with Public Officers Law (POL) §103-a(2)(a), the Natural Heritage Trust, following a public hearing, authorized by Resolution #2023-2 on January 20, 2023 the use of videoconferencing as described in POL §103-a.

The following procedures are hereby established to satisfy the requirement of POL §103-a(2)(b) that any public body which in its discretion wishes to permit its members to participate in meetings by videoconferencing from private locations under extraordinary circumstances must establish written procedures governing member and public attendance.

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## **I. Standard Procedure**

Natural Heritage Trust Board Members shall be physically present at any meeting of the Natural Heritage Trust unless such member is unable to be physically present at one of the designated public meeting locations due to extraordinary circumstances.

## **II. Extraordinary Circumstances**

- a. For purposes of these procedures, the term “extraordinary circumstances” includes disability, illness, caregiving responsibilities or any other significant or unexpected factor or event which precludes the member’s physical attendance at such meeting.
- b. If a member is unable to be physically present at one of the designated public meeting locations and wishes to participate by videoconferencing from a private location due to extraordinary circumstances, the member must notify the Board Chair and Natural Heritage Trust Executive Director no later than four business days prior to the scheduled meeting in order for proper notice to the public to be given.

If extraordinary circumstances present themselves on an emergent basis within four business days of a meeting, the Natural Heritage Trust shall update its notice as soon as practicable to include that information. If it is not practicable for the Natural Heritage Trust to update its notice, the organization may reschedule its meeting.

- c. The public notice for the meeting shall inform the public: (i) that extraordinary circumstances videoconferencing will (or may) be used, (ii) where the public can view and/or participate in such meeting, (iii) where required documents and records will be posted or available, and (iv) the physical location(s) for the meeting where the public can attend.
- d. If members of the Natural Heritage Trust are authorized to participate by videoconferencing from a private location due to extraordinary circumstances, the Natural Heritage Trust shall provide the opportunity for members of the public to view such meeting by video, and to participate in proceedings by videoconference in real time where public comment or participation is authorized. The Natural Heritage Trust shall ensure that, in the extraordinary circumstances where/when videoconferencing is used, it authorizes the same public participation or testimony as in-person participation or testimony.
- e. Except in the case of executive sessions conducted pursuant to POL §105, the Natural Heritage Trust shall ensure that its members can be seen, heard and identified while the meeting is being conducted, including but not limited to any motions, proposals, resolutions and any other matter formally discussed or voted upon. This shall include the use of first and

last name placards physically placed in front of the members or, for members participating by videoconferencing from private locations due to extraordinary circumstances, such members must ensure that their full first and last name appears on their videoconferencing screen.

- f. If there is a quorum of members participating at a physical location(s) open to the public, the Natural Heritage Trust may properly convene a meeting. A member who is participating from a remote location that is not open to in-person physical attendance by the public shall not count toward a quorum of the Natural Heritage Trust, but may participate and vote if there is a quorum of members at a physical location(s) open to the public.

### **III. Posting Guidelines**

- a. The Natural Heritage Trust shall provide that each open portion of any meeting conducted using extraordinary circumstances videoconferencing shall be recorded and that such recordings are posted or linked on the Natural Heritage Trust website within five business days following the meeting and shall remain so available for a minimum of five years thereafter. Such recordings shall be transcribed upon request.
- b. Open meetings of the Natural Heritage Trust conducted using extraordinary circumstances videoconferencing pursuant to the provisions of POL §103-a shall utilize technology to permit access by members of the public with disabilities consistent with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, and corresponding guidelines. For the purposes of this guideline, “disability” shall have the meaning defined in Executive Law §292.
- c. The minutes of the meetings involving videoconferencing based on extraordinary circumstances pursuant to POL §103-a shall include which, if any, members participated by videoconferencing from a private location due to such extraordinary circumstances.
- d. These procedures shall be conspicuously posted on the Natural Heritage Trust website.

### **IV. Exceptions**

The in-person participation requirements of POL §103-a(2)(c) shall not apply during a state disaster emergency declared by the governor pursuant to Executive Law §28 or a local state of emergency proclaimed by the chief executive of a county, city, village or town pursuant to §24 of the Executive Law if the Natural Heritage Trust determines that the circumstances necessitating the emergency declaration would affect or impair the ability of the Natural Heritage Trust to hold an in-person meeting.