

Hello Bill,

After yesterday's meeting, I was trying to think of a way to address an issue brought up at yesterday's Heritage Council meeting--that it may be difficult for some members to attend meetings due to lengthy travel times. As I said at the meeting yesterday, I don't think meetings can be conducted entirely by phone, at least under current law.

Some ideas are:

- (1) Conduct meetings by interactive television, as authorized by Minnesota Statutes, section 13D.02; or
- (2) Conduct meetings at a central location open to the public, but allow a small number of members to participate by telephone. To me, the spirit of the Open Meeting Law would be met if a quorum of the group were present at a public meeting at the announced location, and a minority of members participated by phone. To the best of my knowledge, legislative bodies don't allow members to vote by phone (or to count for purposes of a quorum). The council is not a traditional legislative body, so I'm not sure what parliamentary procedures would apply. But I don't think there would be a problem if a minority of members participated in discussion by phone (assuming a quorum was physically present in the public meeting room). It may be best if only members present at the meeting actually voted. I assume that at some meetings there won't be any votes.
- (3) If members of the council would like the authority to meet by telephone, they could seek a change in the law that would allow that. Groups that currently have this authority are listed in footnote 25 on page 6 of this publication, written by Deborah Dyson in House Research:

<http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/pubs/openmtg.pdf>

[Deb is the House Research expert on Open Meeting Law issues under chapter 13D. I tend to work on open meeting issues that affect the legislature.]