A Planner's Response to the Pandemic Webinar Series

April 23 | Virtual Community Engagement

Questions and Answers

Is this polling tool a proprietary (SmithGroup) app?

No. The tool is Poll everywhere.

Any suggestions on how to use our local access cable stations to do more than just announce meetings?

Good question! Your municipality's communication's manager or official may be able to assist. Anecdotally, it may be making a personal connection with someone at the local station.

Has anyone developed little tutorials or simple "how to's" for sticky notes or dot voting that can be sent to participant prior to an online public engagement meeting?

Microsoft white board isn't optimal. I would suggest placing directions on the side of the screen. Others include: Google tools, GIS, Maps.input. Include a column that explains how to do it on the screen. Definitely, imbed the directions. But before doing dot voting as an engagement technique, consider why are you using dots. Can you get the information you want in a different manner? Because counting dots is tedious.

I personally do not have Facebook. Do you have to have a Facebook account to watch a video stream on the Facebook of a municipality or company like Smith Group if they are hosting it?

Vimeo is very good. But there are other streaming platforms. Vimeo allows the event to be seen live and then it records it.

Our planning commission represents a small city (just under 2500 citizens). We want to hear from the younger people- from say 12-25 years of age- the next generation of community leaders. However, the privacy concerns of having zoom meetings with kids get in the way. Any ideas on how to communicate with children? Meaningfully?

> *Some communities in my area have appointed student representatives to the City Council and to other committees. They work with the school district and the government class to get student applicants.*
>
> *Find out how the high school is using technology, what platforms? They may have accounts set up that can be used by the city. Younger children will be challenging. Ask kids to pre-record ideas with parent's help. Google Meet, maybe?*

Have you ever had an event that highjacked your public engagement for your project? For example, you are updating the Master Plan and all of a sudden there is a homeless shelter proposed in your community. Prior to the homeless shelter 5 to 10 people came to your meeting after the homeless shelter 50-100 people would come to your public engagement events or polls or surveys but mostly to have negative comments on Homeless People or the Elected Officials in the community. What would you do if anything to balance this data out? Are there any tools that you think would be helpful?

> *In some cases a "parking lot" can be a good tool for taking public comment that doesn't relate to the primary discussion topic. In this case, it may be worthwhile to create a separate space/platform dedicated to this issue.*

Do we have to allow anonymous access? ...like in in-person meetings where the OMA says one doesn't have to ID oneself name/address etc. ?

> *This is a conundrum. Before a person could sit in the audience at a public meeting and not identify themselves. If a person commented, then identification was necessary. With remote meetings, it's difficult. Meetings could be viewed via Facebook Live, Youtube Live and then attendance information would be more anonymous.*

Thank you for your presentation - great graphics and helpful tips/reminders. This might be a topic for a future webinar, but I wonder if there might be a "middle method" for engagement - something between "in person" and "virtual"? What prompts my question is the city of Detroit's Land Based Projects initiative. Before Covid, we envisioned a springtime

on-site/hands-on/in-person engagement strategy out in the neighborhoods. Now, we have to iterate that approach (obviously!). What are your thoughts?

DIY workshop kits. "Deputize" ambassadors. Online or mail meeting kits to folks. Have front porch "meetings" 6 feet apart. Self-guided walking tours. Scavenger hunts. Tactical urbanism. Pop up trial projects and have people comment on it. These aren't traditional meetings, but you are getting input. Kiosks in parks. Bring your own chalk and allow folks to comment on a board?

For electronic meetings. How do you gauge how much time to allocate for a public hearing during the meeting before you stop collecting input and move on to other agenda items?

Provide opportunity to allow people to continue to comment, even when the meeting is over. Letters, phone calls.

Which tool do you think is best for receiving photos to encourage people to take pictures of community features they like or want to see changed?

All of these tools require an account to be set up which is a barrier. Facebook, Pinterest, Survey tools all allow photos to be shared.