

## Hosting a Virtual District Meeting

(notes from District Directors with added comments from group meeting on 1/30/2021, documented by Diane Sommers)

### Software used:

Districts were using either Zoom or Gotomeeting for their event. The choice in software was generally based upon what they used in other meetings and what their members had experience with and were comfortable with. ARS does provide use of a free commercial Gotomeeting license for Districts or Local Rose Societies to use for events (available in the Resource tab at [rose.org](http://rose.org)). It was recommended to not use a “free” version available as an online retail product as they often have limitations on meeting time, attendance etc.

### Length of Meeting:

Recommendation is to limit the time to not exceed 3 - 4 hours. Several Districts spread the meeting out over a couple of days - similar to how events take place at an in-person District event.

### Pre-Event Planning:

To have a good virtual meeting takes practice and preplanning! Topics covered included the following:

- Registration: Only one District has done reservations but most Districts thought this would be beneficial. Registration would help you to know who is planning to attend, helps the speakers to understand who is on the meeting, and identifies who to reach out to if they have not registered. Pre-registering people also helps to confirm you have the correct email address for them. Should you choose to charge for your event, you would need to pre-register people. You may suggest that people be sure to sign in with their actual names for tracking purposes.
- Event Team: Be sure to assign someone to manage the technology during the event. They should also facilitate the practice sessions.
- Practice: Hold sessions with the speakers to make sure they understand how to use the software; test and practice the sharing of their screens and audio. It was suggested to drop the resolution of powerpoint programs to limit bandwidth consumption.
- Engage with board members and local rose society presidents several times to confirm agenda and provide technology instructions.
- You may want to practice hosting a meeting with a smaller group prior to doing a District meeting. Or you could limit your District meeting to a few members of each local rose society.
- Determine if you want to charge a fee: One District was successful in charging a fee, where a portion was allocated to cover District costs and the remainder was targeted to a District project (in this case the ARS Garden Restoration project). Members had the flexibility to only pay to cover District needs. Other targets may include a District project or ARS Trust.
- Invitation: Be sure to have ARS send out a notice to all District members for you. There are ARS members that are not Local Rose Society members and virtual meetings are a way to engage with these members.

## **Event Communication:**

The more communication the better! Promote your meeting through District Newsletters, Email blasts to members, Email to local rose society presidents, and District Facebook pages. Best practice may include adding a recap blog on your District website, adding a recording of the meeting and programs on your District website, and informing membership of these postings.

Be sure to send a reminder of the meeting with the call in instructions within 24 hours of the event. Some Districts waited to first send the meeting instructions to the day before the meeting so that it was not lost in email boxes.

## **Meeting Agenda:**

Meeting agenda's varied by District and included the following:

District officer updates	District Director updates
District Awards	Announcements of future events
Speakers & Programs	Virtual Rose Show results
Virtual Photography Show results	Local Rose Society updates
Rose Show Expo - photos from members gardens	

Voting: some used Survey Monkey for voting. If there is a small group, voting can be taken by hands raised, roll call, or perhaps chat session. It was also suggested to count the "no's" only (required pre-agreement by members).

## **Other Comments:**

Help members unfamiliar with Technology by inviting them to join another member for the meeting (social distance as required)

Consider doing a virtual rose show

Consider doing a virtual garden tour; this enables you to experience more gardens than could be done on a one day bus tour. The Pacific NW District did this in summer 2020 and is planning another in 2021. PNW did charge to attend this tour.