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Subject: Public Comment Keep Hybrid Meetings - make them even better...
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Covid was a horrible experience but one good thing that came of it was Zoom Meetings. Attending a meeting after leaving work early, driving through traffic, sitting in an uncomfortable chair with nothing to eat was never a good experience. Council has complained about the cost of the zoom meetings, but no one has discussed the consultant fees and city staff time saved by not paying for them to drive to Sebastopol.

Through the four years I have been closely following Sebastopol City Council it has become clear that allowing public comment is an obligation you take seriously. Although public comments are routinely ignored or even dismissed if one or two council members are listening it is worth it.

Instead of shutting down zoom meetings, this is a good time to refocus on making zoom even better. If we need new policies or technology to deal with Zoom bombings, then develop them. Adding the capability to contribute text comments would allow more efficient and timely input and questions from the public. Initiate a communication program to inform and encourage everyone in Sebastopol to participate. Publish simple instructions that individuals who have never used Zoom can understand. Get email addresses for every household in town and email a simplified notice of the topics that will be discussed at the meeting. Councilperson Maurer puts out a nice preview and meeting summary.

Instead of joining cities that are shutting out the public, Sebastopol should lead the way as a model for how to make government more effective using technology.

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