Senate Bill 493 was amended last week by House Education with a proviso, stating, "...(If) the live broadcast experiences a technical interruption in which the stream is discontinued or digitally interrupted, the meeting may continue while such technical interruptions are being resolved." A second amendment requires county boards to provide "...(A) description of each matter voted on by a county board along with how each member voted on the matter shall be published on the county board’s website and remain published on the county board’s website for at least two years."

The state Department of Education also revised the Fiscal Note for this bill from the original $0, saying, "There are no costs to state government. The estimated costs to county boards of education is $000.00-$1,000.00. This measure would require a web-camera and a microphone. For boards of education that do not currently own a web-camera or microphone, the cost would range from $500.00 - $1,000.00. The Microsoft Office Suite, which is currently provided to all counties, can be used for live streaming and storing the recorded videos.

County Board of Education Audio/Video Board Meeting Survey

By West Virginia School Board Association

Senate Bill 493, adopted by the West Virginia Senate, February 8, 2022, requires county boards of education to "(Ensure) that all of (their) meetings are open to the public through in-person attendance and that the audio and video of its meetings are broadcast live to the public through an internet link on its website. In addition to being available live, each county board also shall ensure that the audio and video is recorded and that the recording is also available through a link on its website. This subsection does not apply to the holding of an executive session pursuant to (§6-9A-4) of this code. Each county board may make and enforce reasonable rules for attendance and presentation at any meeting where there is not room enough for all members of the public who wish to attend, subject to the following:

(1) The county board shall adopt procedures related to delegations and speakers at meetings to ensure delegations and speakers are treated equally; and
(2) For any person expressing an interest in speaking at the meeting, the county board shall ensure that the person has the opportunity to speak in compliance with the adopted procedures.

The West Virginia School Board Association (WVSBA) conducted this survey in order to secure information regarding in person county board meetings as well as details regarding existing practices pertinent to the bill’s directives to forecast issues that may arise in terms of implementing this measure which, in a communication to the state senate, we said may require county superintendents and county boards to be both “adaptive” and “entrepreneurial.” Again, the bill directs:

- County boards ensure that the “audio and video of its meetings are broadcast live to the public through an internet link on its website; and,
- That, in addition to being available live, each county board also shall ensure that the audio and video is recorded and that the recording is also available through a link on its website.

Accordingly, twenty-seven school district county superintendents were surveyed as well as county board presidents from those same twenty-seven school districts.

County superintendents and county board members from these counties were surveyed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barbour</th>
<th>Morgan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braxton</td>
<td>Pendleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabell</td>
<td>Pocahontas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calhoun</td>
<td>Preston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doddridge</td>
<td>Putnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fayette</td>
<td>Raleigh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>Ritchie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison</td>
<td>Tyler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDowell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monongalia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

County board presidents were surveyed in regard to a limited number of the questions posed county superintendents. Their responses, which inform survey findings, are included in Endnotes i-vii.

Accordingly, twenty-four county superintendents and eighteen county board presidents from the above-cited school districts responded.

As stated, it is our hope the data we collected informs county school district level efforts to ensure meetings are conducted both in person and, as the proposed legislation requires, that the audio and video of its meetings are broadcast live to the public through an internet link on its website as well as available through a link on the county board website.
County Board of Education Audio/Video Board Meeting Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of county board meetings held January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021</td>
<td>815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the number of Regular, Special and Emergency meetings, how many were in Person and Streaming</td>
<td>604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the number of Regular, Special and Emergency meetings, how many were in Person Only</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Of the meetings cited above, ninety-five (95) occurred external to the central office or regular county board meeting site/room.

1. What are some positives of streaming meetings?

Meetings are currently available through audio stream so none
Those uncomfortable with covid can still watch the meeting.
Allowed many more people to "attend" especially when controversial issues such as masking were discussed.
More people attend
Allows for more public participation and understanding the workings of a board of education.
So the community can watch the board meetings.
Allows people to participate without leaving their home or office.
Access to more of our citizens
Availability for citizen that cannot attend a regular meeting. However, that would be minimal in my opinion.
More access to citizens
better access for more members of the public
More viewership. Archiving/documenting meeting of the meeting. Transparency.
Community Accessibility
Convenience
There are many who are not able to attend the meeting but watch the live streams.
Convenience for individuals who do not want to attend in person.
Transparency of BOE goals and mission. Facts of meetings shared with everyone.
During high transmission periods of COVID this provided safety to those wanting to who preferred not to be in the public
If needed it allows for overflow attendance

Note: County board presidents’ responses are included in Endnote 1.

2. What are some challenges your board faces in streaming its meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bandwidth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural areas such as ours often have internet issues on the receiving end especially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access for individuals residing in areas in the county with limited or no internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We only stream audio and not video at this time. At times, the audio isn’t as clear when we have delegations or other presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable internet service at the time of meeting and equipment failures or not operational throughout meeting. Lack of control over those online from unmuteing and disrupting meetings. Interference with audio systems in some locations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting the technology coordinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The biggest challenge has been ensuring that the sound is picked up on the live stream.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-site streaming is difficult due to equipment differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proper equipment, stable connectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just some added technical set up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet service for everyone in county poor and political attacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding to support streaming technology and services, ability to provide consistent services when meetings are not located in our regular meeting room, interaction with online participants is very difficult, participants often have poor connectivity on their end in our county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Connectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No current personnel in place to do so or dedicated staff to audio/video stream and archive video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initially, audio feedback, but it is under control now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving equipment and personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring audio connection to those individual participating in the meeting citizen forum virtually with those at the meeting in person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality footage of meetings held outside the central office. For meetings held in our central office, if not all board members are in person and want to zoom into the meeting, we have feedback from the microphones, and zoom continues the live stream through executive session, whereas Swagit does not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera Location, availability of staff, sound quality, cost of equipment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: County board presidents’ responses are included in Endnote 2.

3. What are some negatives of streaming meetings?
The issue of executive sessions and having to log out and then remember to log back in to complete the business as presented on the agenda. The cost and additional set up time involved in making sure the streaming and audio services are working and compatible prior to a meeting taking place at a sight away from the board office. Some felt ignored when those present could ask questions and they could not. We solved it by limiting questions when there was a large crowd (one per participant)
Audio Visual/Camera needs and costs. Extra cost of staffing at meeting. Prohibits moving to multiple locations (various schools for LSIC) due to audio quality/set-up
Ensuring that all the speakers can be heard.
Broadband access for all citizens of the county
extra effort and resources are necessary to provide this service, people who would normally never participate and don't understand what's happening can take information out of context and create social media threads of inaccurate and unproductive information and rhetoric, not as productive/meaningful as in-person attendance at meetings
Very few people take advantage of it.
Lack of in-person participants, sometimes the intended message is disrupted due to poor connectivity of participants and sometimes our streaming capabilities
Social media discussions that are not factual
Meetings are streamed live via audio so video would add additional costs and unnecessary burdens
Sometimes technology does not work as you think it would, such as live streaming executive session.
Staff dedicated to stream meetings, archiving video and audio of meetings. Cost to district for doing such.
Technical difficulties at the last minute and the inability to change formatting
Technical issues affecting access.
Negative and inappropriate comments from the community.
Unpredictable technology issues (hardware, software, broadband, etc.) Communicating to those that only "call in" when going into executive sessions, etc., if they join after an executive session has already started. Failure to mute and/or unmute, prior to or end of meeting.
Negative and inappropriate comments made to others.
Personal Interaction Internet issues

Note: County board presidents’ responses are included in Endnote 3.

4. Please list difficulties, if any, incurred with meetings held external to the central office or regular county board meeting room:

Audio needs, connection between Zoom Broadcast and YouTube;
Audio was available for any meeting where by persons exceeded the capacity of the Board Meeting Room. No one was refused entrance at any meeting.

Broadband;
Adequate Video and Audio;
Live stream was not as good of quality as it is in our board room. Zoom is not as reliable as we would like (security challenges) and Microsoft Teams resulted in poor audio and visual quality (not able to zoom into certain people or PowerPoint).

Structural Technology Capabilities of Meeting Room;
We normally hold 6-8 meetings a year at schools, but due to COVID 2021 didn’t allow for this or we would’ve had additional difficulties.

Note: County Board Presidents’ responses are included under Endnote 4th.

5. Which county board staff most usually is primarily responsible for streaming meetings?
6. Are specific staff trained to assist in streaming meetings?

|   |  
|---|---
| Yes | 13  
| No  | 11  

7. If specific staff is used to do the trainings, who conducts this training?

- IT Staff
- Head of IT
- Innovation Team
- Director of Technology
- IT Department
- Technology and Communications Departments
- Technology System Specialist
- Director
- Operations Officer

8. What platform does your county board primarily use for streaming meetings?
What platform does your county board primarily use for streaming meetings

Note: Microsoft reference includes Microsoft Teams/Microsoft Teams Audio.

9. How would you rank your value for:

Our administration/board would benefit knowing where to access various resources to assist in streaming meetings, including potential training for school personnel, possible grants to assist with streaming and use of students – public school, CTE, or college-level – students who could assist with streaming.

High Value 5*
Moderate Value 4
Little Value 11
No Value 3

Note: For county board presidents’ responses, refer to Endnote 5

10. How would you rank your value for:
Evaluation of effectiveness of streamed meetings provided by persons/firms proficient in streaming. Would be of

High Value 5*
Moderate Value 9
Little Value 7
No Value 2

Note: For county board presidents’ responses, refer to Endnote 6
11. How would you rank your value for:
Training of staff by external agencies and entities proficient in providing streamed services. Would be of

| High Value | 3* |
| Moderate Value | 7 |
| Little Value | 8 |
| No Value | 5 |

Note: For county board presidents’ responses, refer to Endnote 7”

Endnotes
County Board Presidents’ Responses

1 What are some positives of streaming meetings?

- More access to our meetings by the public
- Transparency for the public, Allows us to review the meeting.
- Availability of information to the staff and public is a great positive. Space constraints or health and safety issues do not enter into the use of the streaming platform.
- Public access to board activities, public comments, and planned actions.
- During the pandemic it allows the public to participate and watch the happenings of the meeting
- Transparency.
- A great number of parents/community members could be present.
- More people observe the meetings.
- More people could attend a meeting especially during discussions on controversial issues such as masks.
- People who cannot make it go a meeting can listen.
- Allowing public access to our meetings
- Larger community participation. In addition, the ability to have virtual meetings allows us to not have to cancel meetings due to weather or other circumstances.
- Knowing everyone has opportunity to participate

2 What are the challenges your board faces in streaming its meetings?

- Broadband connection and equipment to efficiently stream a well-heard and seen meeting.
- Going outside of central office commits IT department to supporting these meetings. Another issue is when attendees are out of order. This could illustrate to students bad behavior by adults/parents.
- When we use larger offsite venues, we face challenges with quality footage as well as the software integration issues. We are also concerned with maintaining security with certain platforms. Executive sessions need to maintain confidentiality.
- Upkeep of streaming equipment and cost of employing possibly staff.
- We currently stream, however, the internet countywide is not what it should be (frontier!)
• We are effectively streaming the board meetings.
• No need to do it. We hold our meetings as we always have. We are not radical about masking but allow each individual to decide for themselves the safety measures they want to take.
• The biggest hurdle is reliable, speedy internet.
• Don’t dream
• We’re rural. That means we have pockets of areas in the county with no access to broadband. It is also more of a problem controlling comments and open mics from the public.
• Because of the ruralness of the county many times people had trouble joining or staying with the meetings.
• Acoustics in the room and spacing of participants.
• Lack of general broadband access
• We have done a good job since March of 2020 refining and perfecting streaming of all of our regular meetings. Once again, off-site meetings in a school for instance would be a challenge.
• None really just low usage

ii What are some negatives of streaming meetings?

• If there are any technology or software issues, it raises great suspicions. Sometimes the public does not feel the need to attend in person and may not feel as connected to the board and the staff present.
• The internet is not the best, therefore not providing a real-time experience.
• Tech issues, when they arise, frustrate the public trying to watch the meeting.
• It discourages the public from interacting with the board
• Open mics 2. Controlling comments and typed questions during non-delegation portion of the agenda. 3. Communicating and controlling the meeting in general.
• Discussions do not allow for everyone to input ideas, so it seemed more attention was paid to those in person.
• People have a hard time hearing and feedback.
• Possible grandstanding/ politicization by some members of public
• Audience disruption- but once we started having our meetings in webinar mode that fixed it.
• Lack of intro action
• We don’t stream, or have public come to meetings. The county newspaper provides good coverage and people don’t desire to come.
• Using Facebook to stream has allowed the public to comment during our meeting, almost in a delegation fashion. Board members have accessed those comments during meetings. - Viewers doing other activities while accessing live streams can miss crucial information, whereas in-person attendance typically keeps attention better.
• The time it takes for the IT staff to coordinate, setup, etc.

iv Please list difficulties, if any, incurred with meetings held external to the central office or regular county board meeting room.

• Broadband
• Structural technology capabilities of meeting room

v How would you rank your value for:

Our administration/board would benefit knowing where to access various resources to assist in streaming meetings, including potential training for school personnel, possible grants to assist with streaming and use of students – public school, CTE, or college-level – students who could assist with streaming

| High Value | 4 |
| Moderate Value | 5 |
How would you rank your value for:

Evaluation of effectiveness of streamed meetings provided by persons/firms proficient in streaming. Would be of

| High Value | 7 |
| Moderate Value | 4 |
| Little Value | 4 |
| No Value | 2 |

How would you rank your value for:

Training of staff by external agencies and entities proficient in providing streamed services. Would be of

| High Value | 7 |
| Moderate Value | 2 |
| Little Value | 4 |
| No Value | 3 |

*Number of survey respondents.