

Hybrid Meetings

SIA is collecting details of the method and equipment various groups are using for their Hybrid Meetings. There are several workable approaches.

General Issues

- The biggest requirement for holding a hybrid meeting is a stable internet connection either via WIFI, WIFI via cell phone hotspot or just regular old cell phone connection
- The equipment needed runs the gamut from just a cell phone to a laptop with an external webcam and microphone attached.
- The more complicated the set up, the more likely you'll need a separate 'tech chair' ensuring the equipment and online portion of the meeting are running smoothly.

Valley 8 O'clock

<https://suffolkny-aa.org/meetings/?tsml-day=any&tsml-query=valley&tsml-region=east-northport>

This group has a very simple and effective system in place.

- They have one laptop set up at the front of the room.
- The speaker and anyone wishing to share steps up to the laptop so the camera and microphone can pick up their face and voice clearly.
- The laptop's screen is projected onto a large screen such that everyone in the room can see the online participants.
- Note that this setup means that the online participants do not see the room as a whole.

Stony Brook Freethinkers

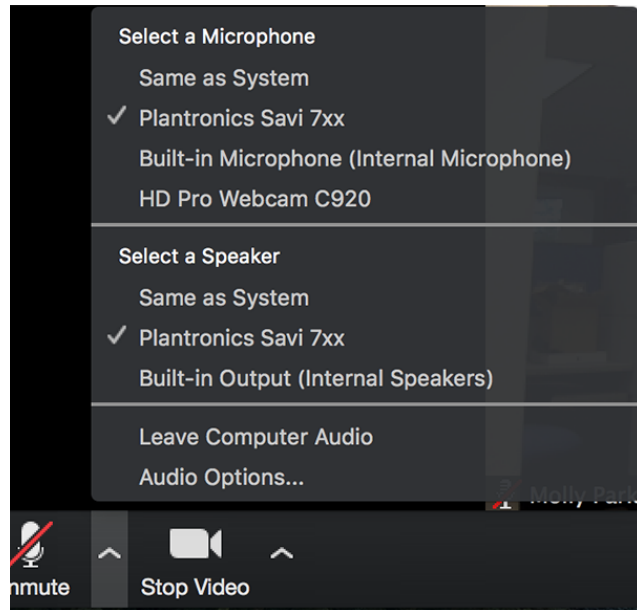
<https://suffolkny-aa.org/meetings/?tsml-day=any&tsml-query=freethinkers&tsml-region=stony-brook>

Our group had a couple of rough meetings before we figured out what worked best for us. Here is what we discovered.

The key here is that Zoom is very good at allowing you to employ a laptop that has multiple speakers, microphones and video cameras attached to it.

You can select which speaker or microphone is HOT using the menu shown to the right. This menu is accessible by clicking the upward facing chevron next to the microphone icon.

A similar menu for controlling which video camera is hot is available by clicking the upward facing chevron next to the video camera icon.



Audio

Audio quality is the most important thing to get right. Good video with lousy audio is no better than bad video and lousy audio.

Laptop's built in mic

The device used to connect to Zoom probably has a decent built-in mic that can be used to pick up the voice of the people very close to it. In our meeting the person working the laptop (tech chair) and the meeting chair are close enough to the laptop that the sound is OK.

Bluetooth Speaker w/built in mic

We have a Bluetooth Speaker w/a built in mic that is used more as a speaker than a mic. At our first meeting we tried using it as a speaker and mic, but it was difficult to hear the folks sharing from the back of the room.

It works well enough though to amplify the shares from the online participants such that folks in the physical room can hear them clearly.

USB Omnidirectional Mic

We purchased an external omnidirectional conference meeting microphone plugged directly to the laptop with an extension to allow it to be placed in the middle of the physical room. This has worked well for our needs.

(Not an endorsement of this specific equipment - listed here as examples!!)



[Omnidirectional Microphone](#)



[USB Extension Cord](#)

Speakers

The simplest solution here is to have an external speaker hard wired to the laptop or connected via Bluetooth. There are many different models available ranging from \$25-\$100.

Video Cameras

Laptop's built-in camera

We tried having the laptop face the room such that the built-in camera captured most of the room. This worked OK, but we found it was better to have an external video camera, so that the tech chair could have full use of the laptop while still being able to capture video of the room.

External Camera connected via USB cable to Laptop

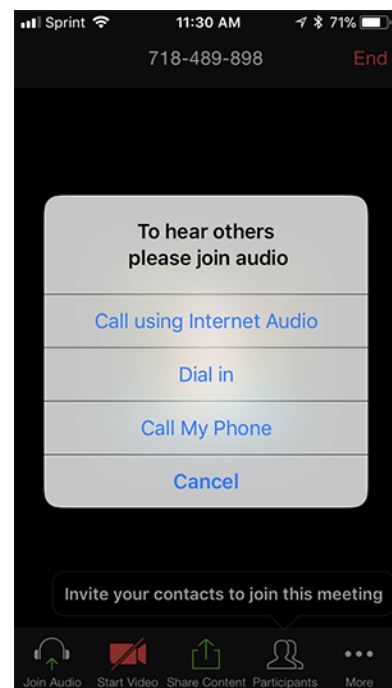
We have an inexpensive USB webcam connected to the laptop and facing the room. The main advantage here is that it allows for the camera to capture a good chunk of the room while also allowing the tech chair to have full access to the laptop to act as the online moderator, etc.

Built-in camera on other devices connected to same Zoom meeting

You can also have additional devices connected to the zoom meeting capturing the video of the chair or the speaker. This can be a smartphone, or tablet or another laptop. The simpler the better.

We would highly recommend you save yourself feedback issues by not connecting to the audio portion of the zoom meeting at all on these other devices. All you need is the video camera.

To do this: When prompted with 'To hear others please join audio' dialog. Do not click on 'Call using Internet Audio' or 'Dial In'. Just Click 'CANCEL'.



External Display

We have an inexpensive External Display connected to the laptop via an HDMI cable.

You could also use MirrorCast or AllPlay or AirPlay to cast your device's screen to the external display that supports casting (e.g. a smart TV)

See:

<https://www.pocket-lint.com/apps/news/151726-how-to-get-zoom-on-your-tv>



St. James Sunrise Reflections

<https://suffolkny-aa.org/meetings/?tsml-day=any&tsml-query=reflections&tsml-region=saint-james>

This group is a PHONE ONLY and LIVE HYBRID meeting and has a very simple and effective system in place.

- This meeting is round-robin, with the chair keeping track of the order in which those who called in and those in the room will be called on to share
- Everyone in the live meeting calls into the phone meeting
- They keep their phone muted and not on speaker phone to prevent feedback
- Only when asked to share, do they unmute their phone
- Only the chair has their phone on speaker phone mode so that those in the room can hear the shares from those that called in

Here's the full description as detailed by Lindsey from St James Reflections:

We tried to have a phone setup with speaker, but it didn't work well. Because people had their own phones, there was a lot of interference when using the speaker. So, what we do is everyone who has a phone in the room, also calls into the dial-in and then mutes their phone and does not put the phone on speaker-mode. When it's their turn to share (our meeting is a round-robin format), they unmute. Only the chair, who is in the room, keeps their phone on Speaker for all the people in the room to hear callers' shares. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair takes the names of those individuals who are just on the phone. We go back and forth between shares in the room and shares on the phone. We typically get between 10 and 15 people who call in each morning. We meet 7 days a week at 6:15 in the morning.

As far as the quality, we've gotten pretty solid. There are still times we struggle to hear a caller or two, but we're pretty smooth at this point. Because we meet so early, there has been more than once that a call-in participant has fallen asleep on the phone - snoring is not what we all need for recovery, haha. But it's really worked very well for us. We didn't move to Zoom because not everyone is tech-savvy in the group. Also, not everyone wants people to see them roll out of bed at 6:15 AM.

We just voted to move to another room down the street I'm Saint James, where more people can fit. That move will take place next month. Even though there will be more room, we intend to keep the Hybrid format for the foreseeable future. We want a bigger room, so the newcomer can join us, but we also want the phone because some of our members aren't comfortable coming to the room. Hybrid recovery is working quite well for us.

If you have any additional questions, feel free to ask!! Thank you for all you do.