A Guide for Teleconference Meetings

The following is a detailed guide on how sign-up for, download, start, and conduct a conference call using one of these conference call providers. What are the general benefits of using one of these providers?

- This is easier for the public to access over conference calls as provided by a standard telecom provider.
- It can be cheaper than a standard telecom provider: some such as GoToMeeting are providing limited time free toll-free number for towns to use for public meetings.
- The board can better control the noise and phone lines that telecom provided conference call.

The following will use GoToMeeting as an example, for several reasons, chief of which is that GoToMeeting is providing a 90-day free trial to Municipalities as "Emergency Remote Work Kits." Also, the model is similar to what is provided by other teleconferencing applications.

Step 1: The Initial Page

Sign up for the service. In this hit the "start for free" in either the center of the page or in the top right:

After you have signed-up, or if you already have an account, you may access your account from the "sign-in" tab.
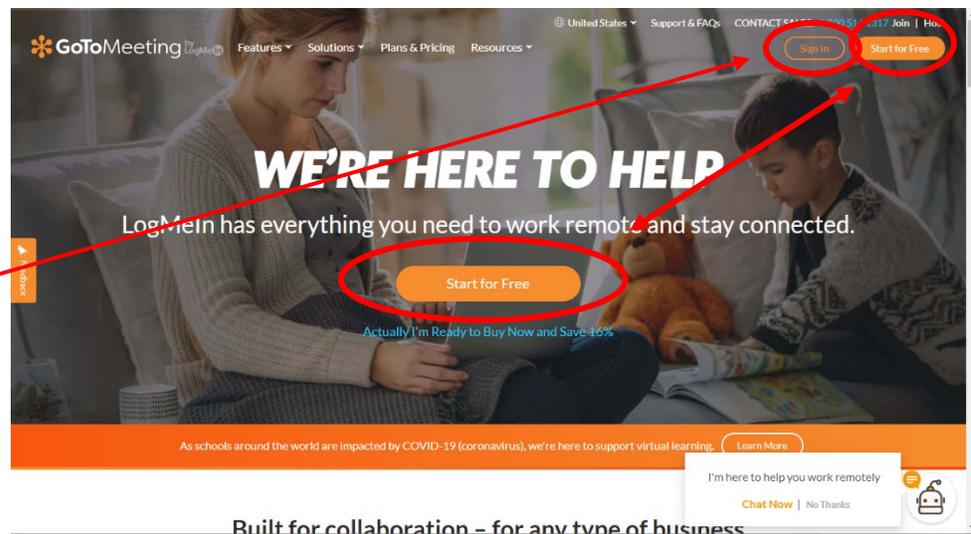
Step 2: Signing-up

Fill in the requested information. Adding in the "Optional" information will tend to help setting up the service more efficiently.

Most providers will not request any billing information.

Although not necessary, providing contact information can be useful when requesting assistance

Step 3: Logging-in for the First Time

After filling in the information and hitting the "sign-up" button, you will be presented with the following page:

Hit the create meeting to set up your first meeting and download the software.

This is the hub for GoToMeeting and the hub for most meeting sites looks similar. Creating a meeting allows you to launch a meeting in the near future or schedule it in advance for your meeting day.

Step 4: Creating a Meeting

After hitting "create a meeting," you will be presented with a pop-up with three tabs, one relating to the meeting time, one related to the audio configuration and call-in ability for those either in or outside the U.S.A., and a tab that would create "co-organizers" or co-hosts or require a password to meet:

Click the desired tab to modify.

An online meeting room will create a perpetual location where people can meet.

The one-time meeting will create a meeting that only occurs during the scheduled day and time.

This will be where you schedule the day of the meeting, the time of the meeting, and the length of the meeting.

One thing to be aware of is the time at the scheduled time will not always be central time. It is not the case here. However, the banner below discusses when a meeting will occur according to the computer's clock, which in this case is 12:00pm compared to the scheduled 10:00am.

Cancel and the "X" will close the pop-up.

Save will close and set the scheduled meeting at the time scheduled.

The following is the audio tab, where the host can control from where people are calling from and how the host can be heard:
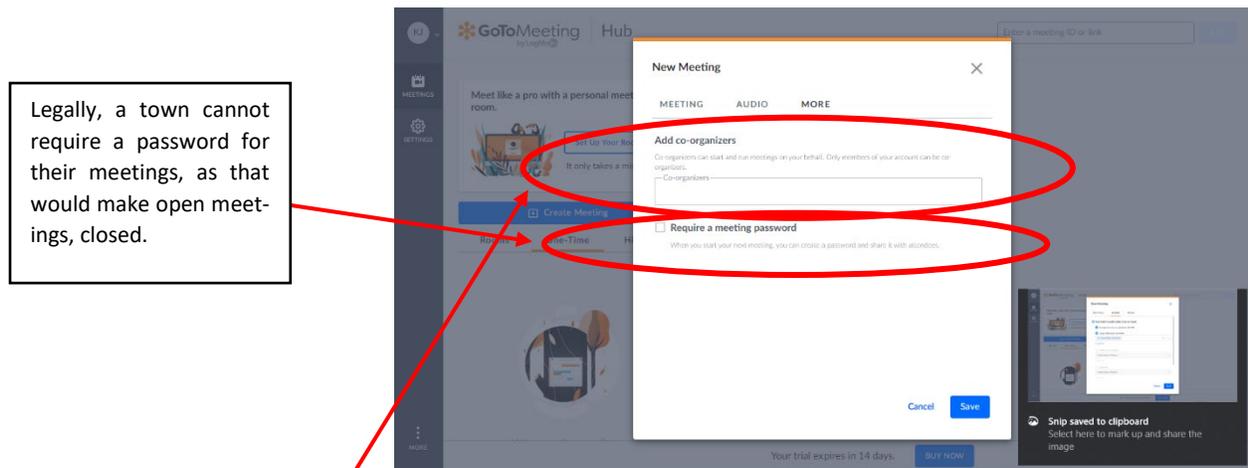
VOIP using the built-in computer audio to communicate on the call.

You may also call in, but this will be discussed later.

You can add additional long-distance numbers here, but that is unlikely to be needed.

With the free or trial version, these features are unavailable. For town officer purposes, it is unlikely that these features are needed.
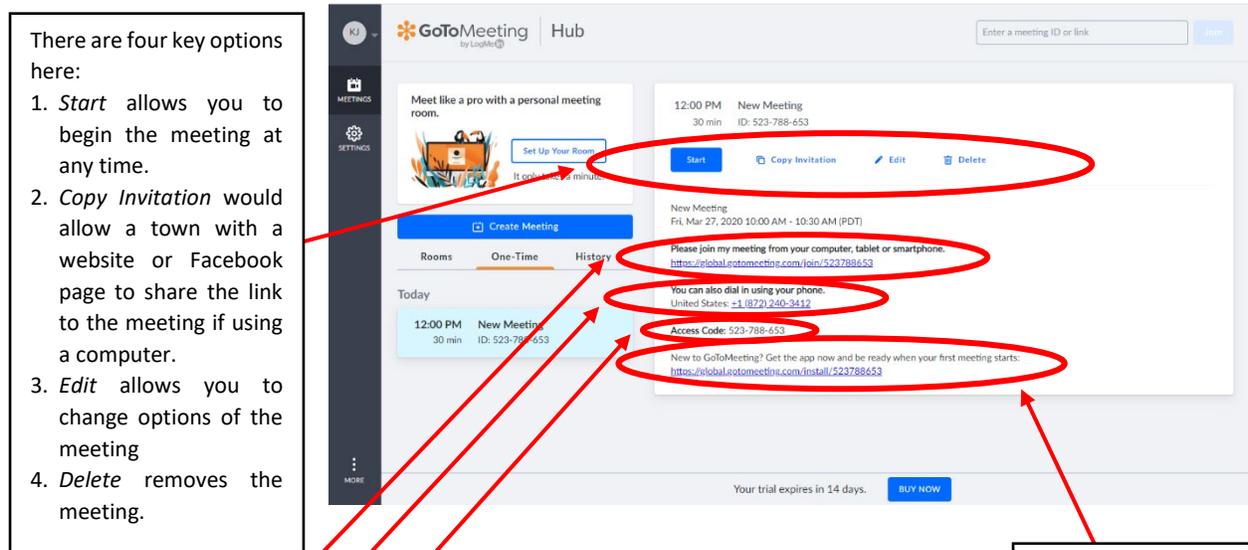
There are two key options under the "more" tab co-organizers and requiring a meeting password:

Legally, a town cannot require a password for their meetings, as that would make open meetings, closed.

If possible, it may be prudent to add a co-organizer that can assist with conducting the meeting by; starting the meeting on time, muting members of the public as needed, and doing other organizational aids that town officers may be too preoccupied with their other roles to do.

Step 5: Your Home Page after Creating a Meeting

After setting up the meeting you will be brought back to the screen behind the tab. This screen will show your upcoming meetings, the soonest meeting first, and subsequent meetings thereafter. This screen provides a number to call into that you can add onto your notice, or a URL for members to join through their computer:

There are four key options here:
1. *Start* allows you to begin the meeting at any time.
2. *Copy Invitation* would allow a town with a website or Facebook page to share the link to the meeting if using a computer.
3. *Edit* allows you to change options of the meeting
4. *Delete* removes the meeting.

To include members of the public to use GoToMeeting, they may add this note to their notice.

There are three modes in which someone may join the meeting. The URL for joining the meeting and the access code both require the GoToMeeting application is needed. This is true for most providers that also provide video conferencing. You can also use a phone number to call into the meeting. The access code will be needed when calling in as well.

There is no need to provide all three of these modes of joining the meeting, most towns are going to, and oftentimes should, only provide the phone number and access code to call into the meeting.

Step 6: Downloading the Application

After you press start, you will be prompted to download the application before you can start your first meeting. You will be presented with a screen with clear instructions:
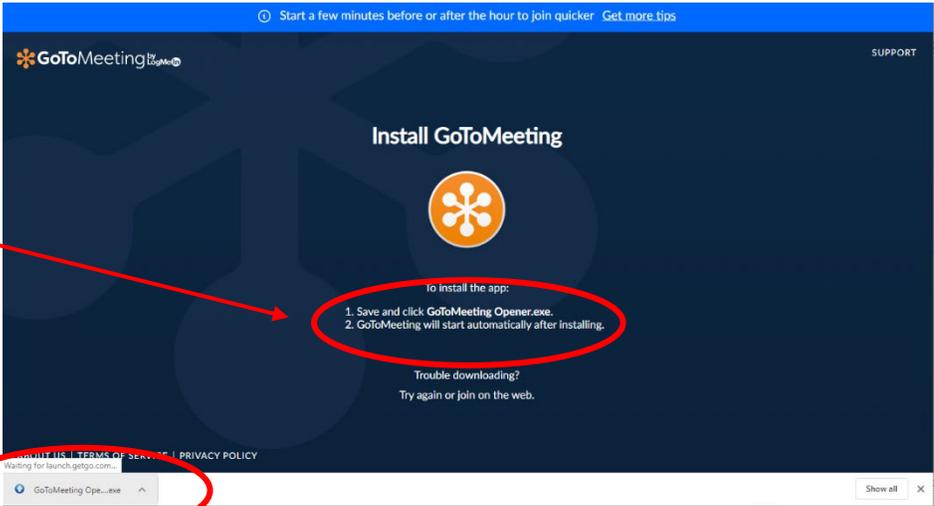

Click Download the App to download the application and run the meeting.
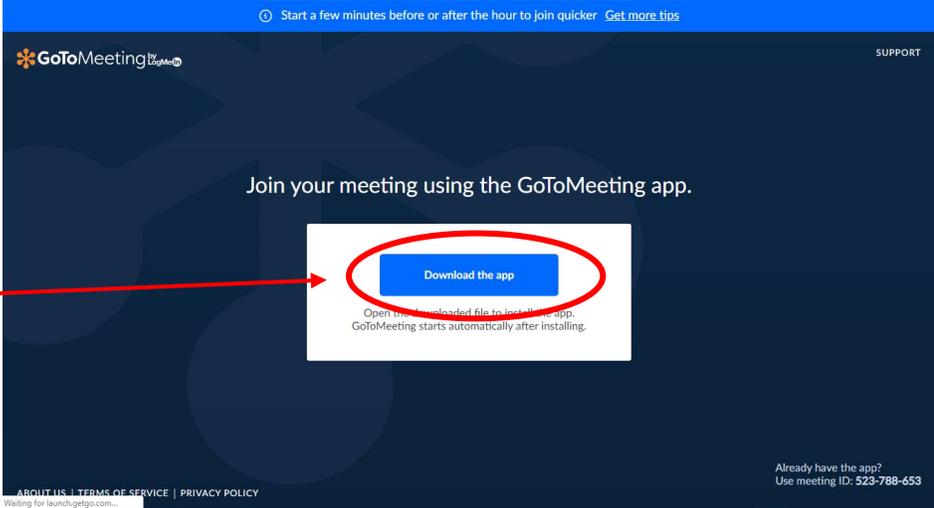
After hitting the "download the app" button, you will be led to a different screen discussing the next steps:

As this says, open the application and follow the instructions.

After you have completed the installation, the application will automatically open.

Although browsers and computers may look different, it is likely that your download will look something like this.

Step 7: Getting Connected to and Heard Prior to the Meeting

When first entering a meeting, you will be asked how to connect your audio and if you would like, video:
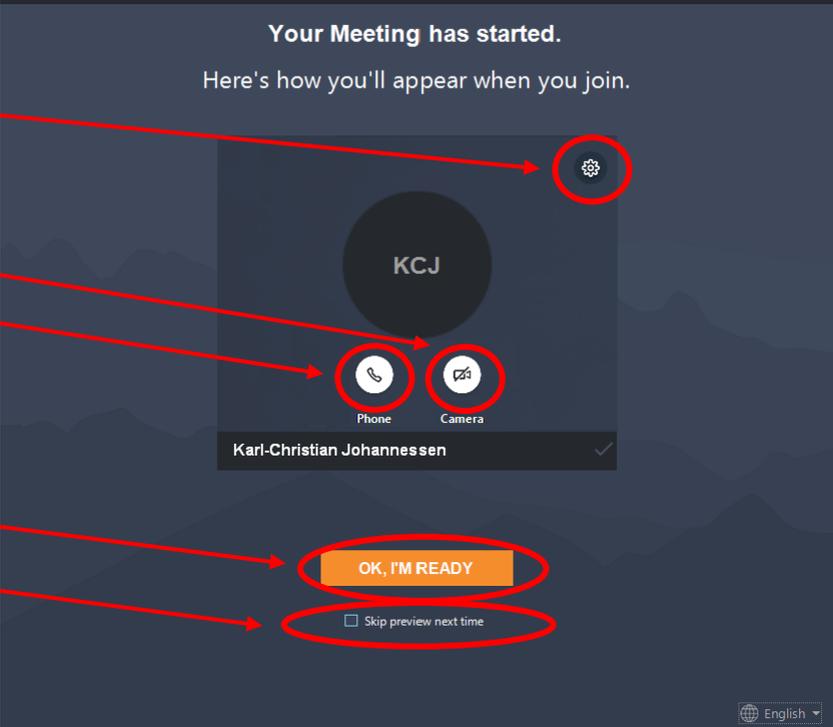
If you would like to change your settings, including audio, hit the gear button.

If would like to mute your audio or cut your video (if you have any) please hit the appropriate button.

If there are no changes, you can hit "ok I'm ready."

If you have made changes and do not need to reconfigure before the next meeting, click the "skip preview next time" box.

If you have clicked the settings button, your screen will be shifted over and a settings bar will be presented. The settings bar really only discusses audio and how the host will connect to the meeting:
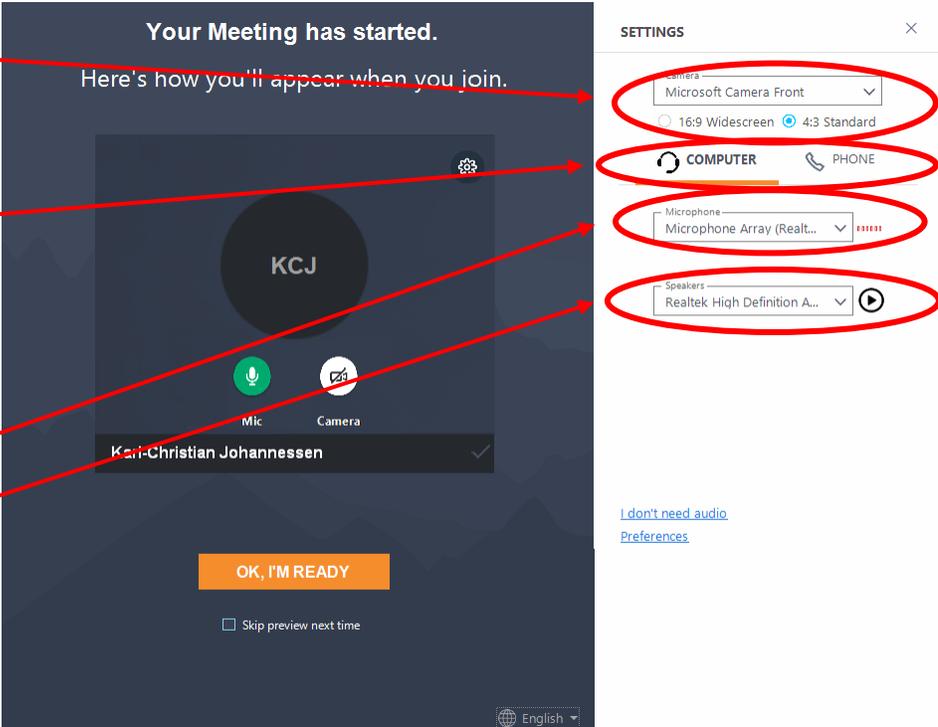
This is your camera setting, if using. Including which device will act as the camera.

These tabs will allow to switch between computer and phone audio. i.e. calling into the meeting for your audio.

These two include the microphone device and speaker device used.

The speaker device may come be useful if using headphones rather than computer speakers.

If you are using your phone as audio for your meeting, the following gives you the phone number to call into, the password (access code) and the audio PIN, in essence telling the meeting room that you are using your own phone as a microphone:

When logging into a meeting by phone you must:

1. Call into the provided number;
2. Dial the access code, and hit pound (#); and
3. Just for the host, dial the audio PIN and hit pound (#).
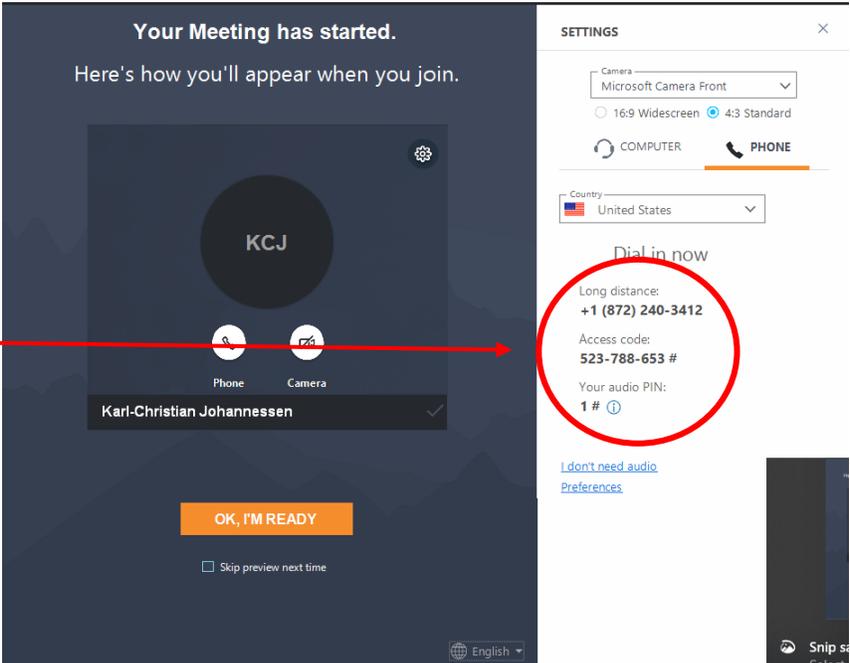
Step 8: Conducting the Meeting

After hitting "Ok, I'm Ready" you will enter a meeting room, here one other call has also entered the meeting room, we will see what a host's options for a meeting are. There are numerous things to discuss on this page that will be discussed in more detail later on:

This changes how the callers are viewed in the meeting, there are four options.

These two buttons include a chat function for those accessing this through a computer and listen all of those who are participating a conference call.

These provide the host with control:
Mic—allows you to mute and unmute yourself.
Camera—allows you to control whether anyone else using a computer can see you.
Share—Allows others to view your computer screen.
Leave—ends the meeting.

Although the view tab give assistance to narrow down who's talking, it is best practice to leave the tab on "view everyone":

Each of these options illuminates the speaker in a different fashion:
1. *Everyone* will highlight the person speaking with a colored ring around the speaker.
2. *Who's talking* will enlarge the talker over all the other speakers.
3. *Active cameras* will only show the speakers who also have cameras. This is helpful if town board members are using the camera, but the public is calling in.
4. *Hide everyone* simply hides everyone
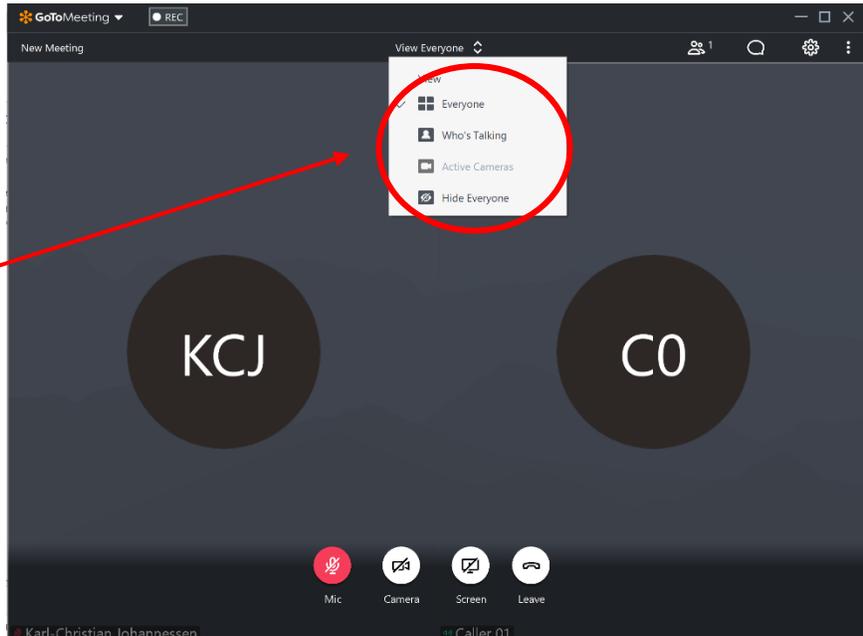
The host may also pull up all of the meeting participants and control whether they are muted or not:

This tab allows for the control of this feature.

Here, you have universal controls to mute all callers (including yourself) or unmute all callers (including yourself).

You are highlighted in blue. You can use all the controls found at the bottom of the screen here.
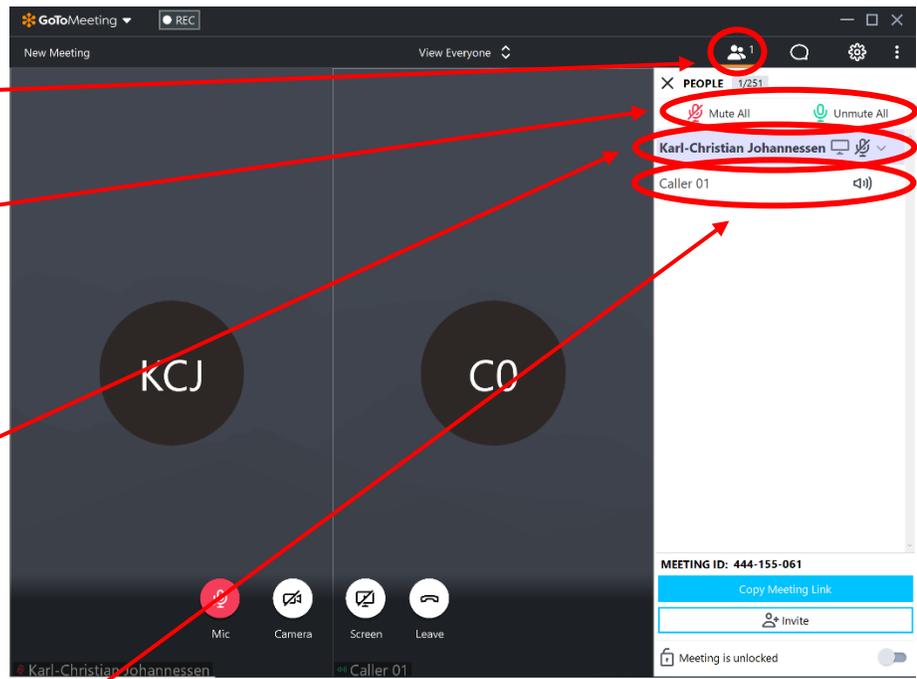
You can mute and unmute individual callers.

If you have members of the public participating by computer, they may use the chat function. Be careful using this as town supervisors, as it is unclear if this would breach open meeting law, as this can lead to "secret discussions" hidden from the public.
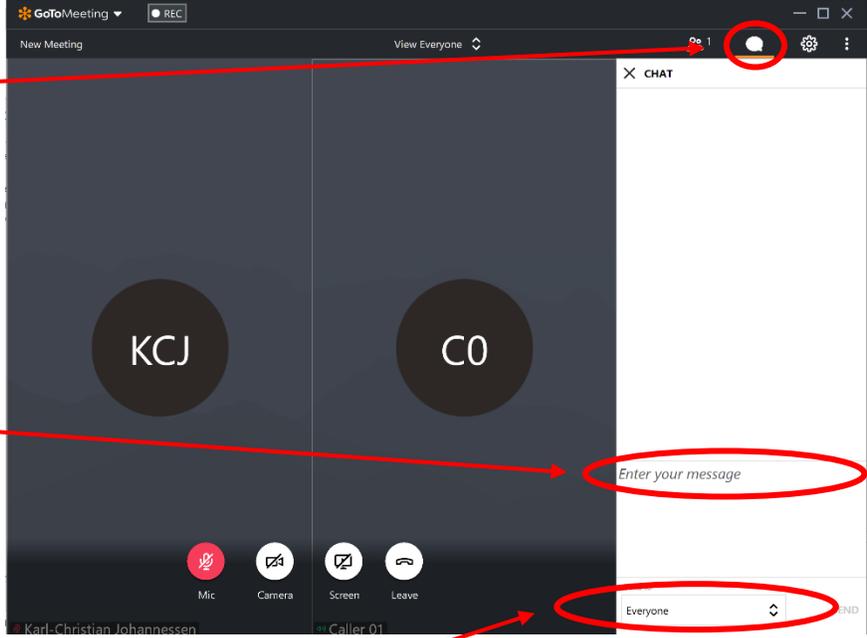
To use the chat function, click this tab.

In order to send a message, type your message here and press enter.

Here you can limit who views your messages. During a board meeting, do not limit messages