

Wireless Microphone Use for Board of Directors Meetings

For several years, OLLI members attending Board meetings, and Board members as well, have commented on the difficulty of hearing remarks by all members of the board. We have an obligation to make reasonable accommodations for folks to be able to hear the proceedings in these meetings, as we do in our classes.

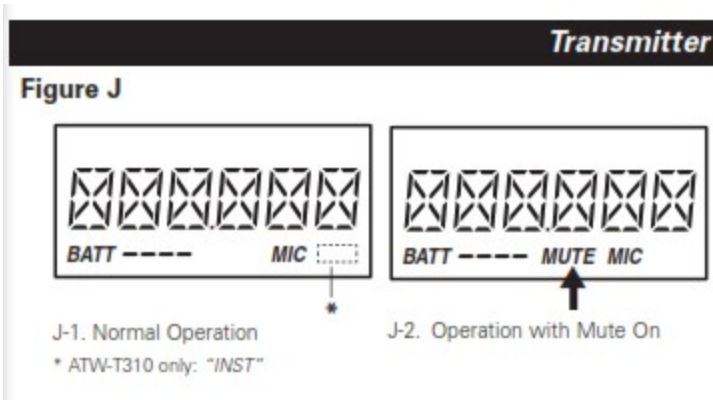
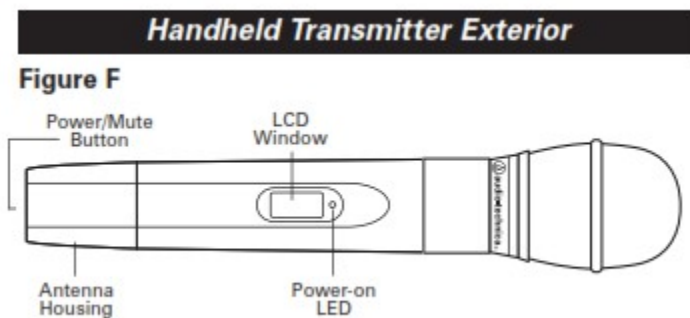
Having our presiding officer use our standard instructor's headworn wireless microphone should allow she / he to control the meeting, while minimizing the challenges of handling and passing a handheld mic, while dealing with agenda and report paperwork.

Other board members and guests may utilize one of four handheld wireless microphones to make their remarks when recognized by the chair.

These mics are designed to be 'close-talked' – held within a range of 1”-5” from the mouth. Holding them in this range will insure maximum performance and intelligibility; holding them still will avoid sound drop-offs and mechanical handling noise.

Figure F shows the location of the Power/Mute button in the base of the mic. Pressing and holding this button turns the mic on (Power-on LED illuminates). Likewise, press and hold turns it off. 'Tapping' the button when the mic is on will toggle the “MUTE” function, which is indicated in the (tiny) LCD display, shown in Figure J. The mic needs to be muted when not being used by a speaker, to avoid feedback problems.

(On some newer models of OLLI's handheld mics, the Power LED will cycle between green – 'active' and red - 'muted')



**Hearing Loss in the Aging Population – by Harriet Kaplan,
Retired Professor of Audiology, Gallaudet University**

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, close to 50% of people age 65 and older have some degree of hearing; half of those people are 75 years and older. Some authorities believe that 60% is a more realistic number. There is every reason to believe that the Olli membership reflects population statistics. Hearing loss caused by the aging process involves not only inability to hear speech, but also difficulty understanding speech, particularly in the presence of competing noise.

Fortunately, there are ways of helping our hearing impaired members benefit from classroom lectures and discussion – amplification systems in every classroom plus requiring all presenters to use a microphone. Suggesting that hearing impaired people sit in the front row is not a solution. First, it would require ten to twelve front rows to meet the needs of the population. Second, it does not deal with the noise issue or with presenter voices that are soft or not overly clear. Third, people should be able to sit wherever they choose.

We have handled these needs very well in Tallwood and Reston. Now we must meet the needs of our members in Loudon. It is our moral and ethical duty to do so. It is also a legal requirement. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) considers hearing impairment a disability and requires all places of public accommodation such as classrooms to provide appropriate accommodations – that means amplification systems. Violation of ADA could result in a Civil Rights lawsuit.

Inclosed is a summary of ADA provisions relevant to hearing impaired people. I would be happy to discuss this issue with anyone who is interested. Please contact me at hkaplan11@verizon.net or 703 383 0919.

Thank you,

Harriet Kaplan