How to join a PATACS Zoom meeting using your computer

By John Krout, PATACS member

You can enjoy a PATACS meeting from just about anywhere your computer has a connection to the Internet. You may need to use this capability if the meeting locale is closed due to inclement weather.

I started to investigate Zoom in Feburary 2019, a week or so before I was to make a Learn in 30 presentation at the Fairfax City meeting of PATACS and OLLI OPCUG. Because of the prospect that winter weather might force the meeting site to close, Paul Howard wrote an email to me and to the other presenter, asking us if we had enough Zoom experience to participate as presenters in a virtual PATACS meeting.

A virtual meeting means club members and the presenters stay at their home sand uses Zoom to meet.

At the time, I told Paul that I was not up to speed on Zoom. It occurred to me that many other club members might be in the same boat. So I decided to get up to speed, and to write this document to explain how to join and enjoy a Zoom meeting.

I confess there is some self interest at work here. If I make a presentation at a virtual meeting, I would like to have a large audience. Snow, ice, et cetera will no longer be an impediment (though a power outage might be).

First of all, if you have never before joined a Zoom meeting, please be aware that the Zoom.us web site will install a program on your computer when you first prepare to join a meeting. The program is called the **Zoom client app**, though it has a very long and convoluted file name, and it does not occupy a vast amount of hard drive space. After the first time, all you do is start the Zoom client.

Second, every Zoom meeting has a **Meeting ID**. These are assigned by Zoom to Zoom account holders.

You do NOT need to be a Zoom account holder to join a Zoom meeting. However, you do have to know the Zoom Meeting ID in order to join a Zoom meeting.

As of February 2019, The two Zoom Meeting ID numbers assigned to PATACS are:

510 103 813 (the Fairfax City PATACS/OLLI OPCUG meeting), and

894 485 185 (the Arlington PATACS meeting)

Those numbers appear on the PATACS.org web site home page. You can find them anytime, even if you lose this article.

FIRST TIME, STEP BY STEP

Now let's go through the process of joining a Zoom meeting using your computer for the very first time.

This first-time process takes several minutes. It is a good idea to start maybe an hour or so before the scheduled start time of the meeting, if you want to see the entire meeting. It is an even better idea to do the install the night before the next meeting, when you have no time pressure.

1. Go to the Zoom.us web site. Here is the link: https://Zoom.us

Illustration 1 shows that page, with the link to Join a Meeting circled.

Illustration 1

2. On the Zoom.us home page, Click on the Join a Meeting link.

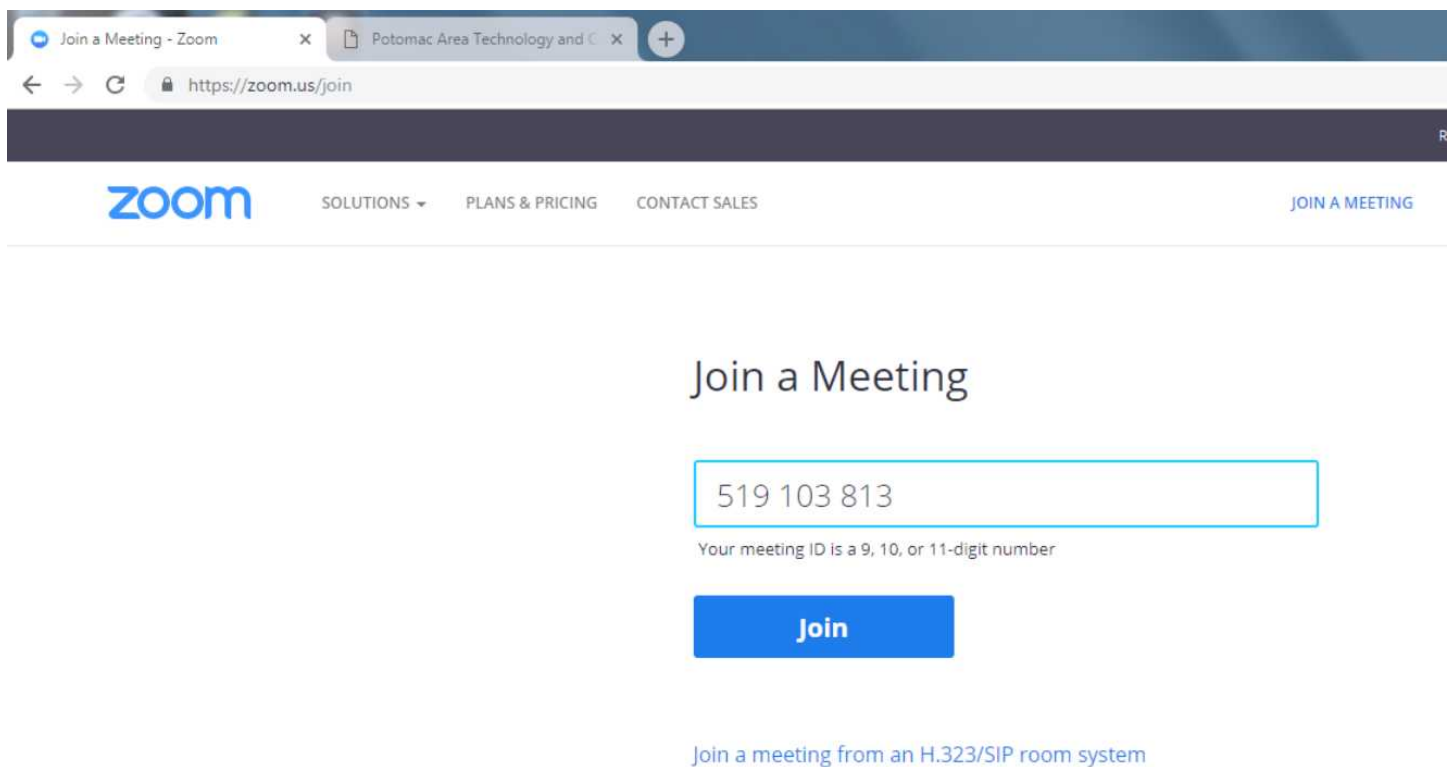That click open the Zoom.us Join a meeting page. **Illustration 2** shows that page.

 Illustration 2

This is where you fill in the Meeting ID number. As you can see in that illustration, I filled in the Meeting ID number for the PATACS Fairfax City meetings.

3. After filling in the Meeting ID number, click on the Join button on that page.

At that point, the Zoom.us site will check to see if you have already installed the Zoom client application. Since this is

your first time accessing a Zoom meeting using this computer, you do NOT have the Zoom client application installed.

So the site, as shown in **Illustration 3** below, tries to download the client application to your computer. In my case, while I was screen-capturing the illustrations, the download did not start, so I had to click on the **Download Here** link. That click did start the download.
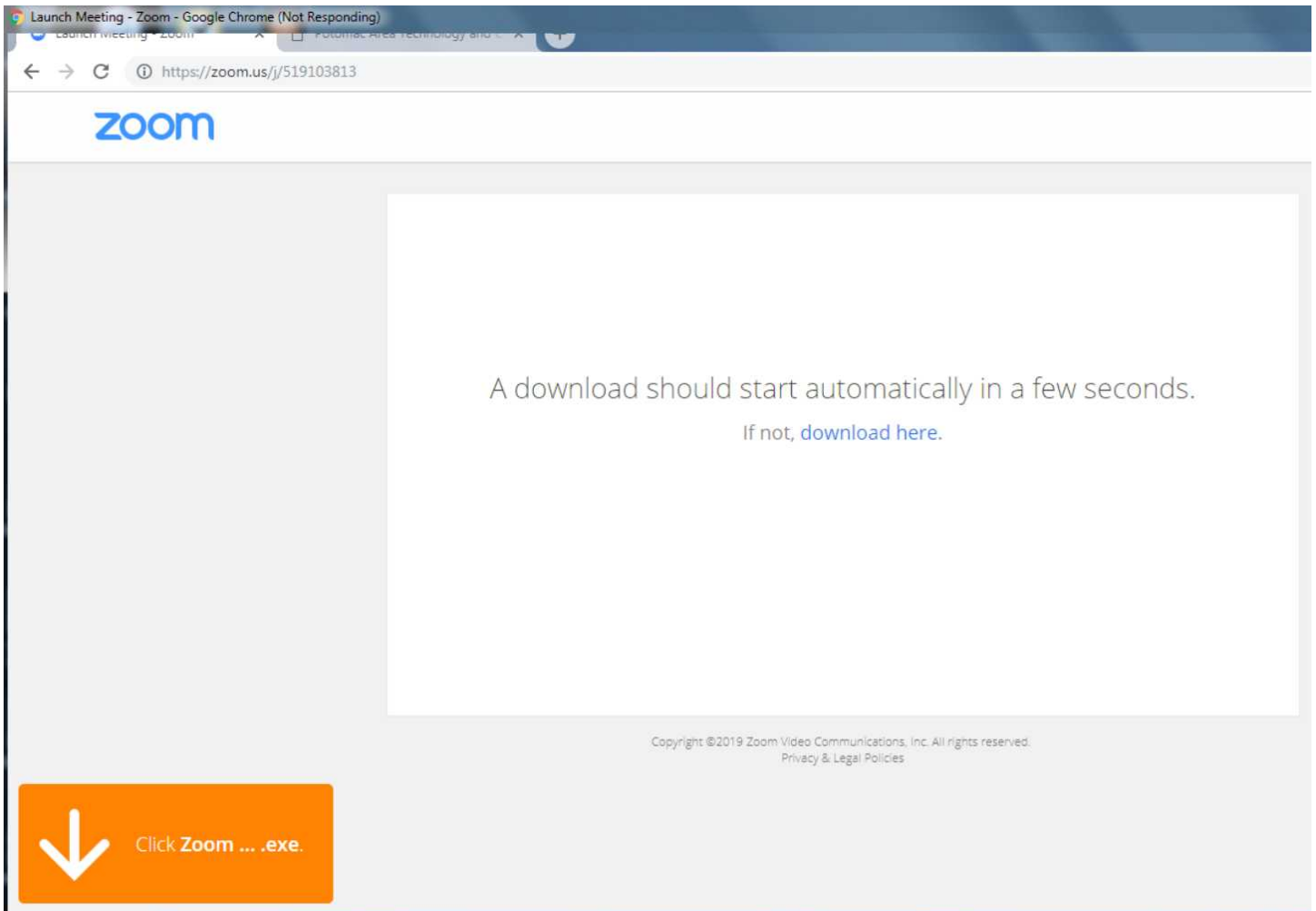

Illustration 3

4. The downloaded installer showed up in a download bar at the bottom of the web browser. It is important to wait until the download is completed. Then start the downloaded application by double-clicking on its name in the download bar.

5. The usual Windows cautionary dialog windows show up. When the installer starts, the computer asks: Do you want to let this program make changes to your computer? Click on the OK or Yes button. When the Zoom client is installed and starts up, the computer asks: Do you want to run this file? Click on the Run button.

6. The Zoom client will display a dialog window asking you to type in your name. it is shown in **Illustration 4** below. **Please fill in your full name.** This info is valuable in many ways. If you have a microphone attached to your computer, or you use the Zoom phone numbers to access the meeting audio over a phone, then you can ask a question and the meeting host will be able to call on you by name. Also , by typing your name, the meeting host is told that you are attending the meeting.
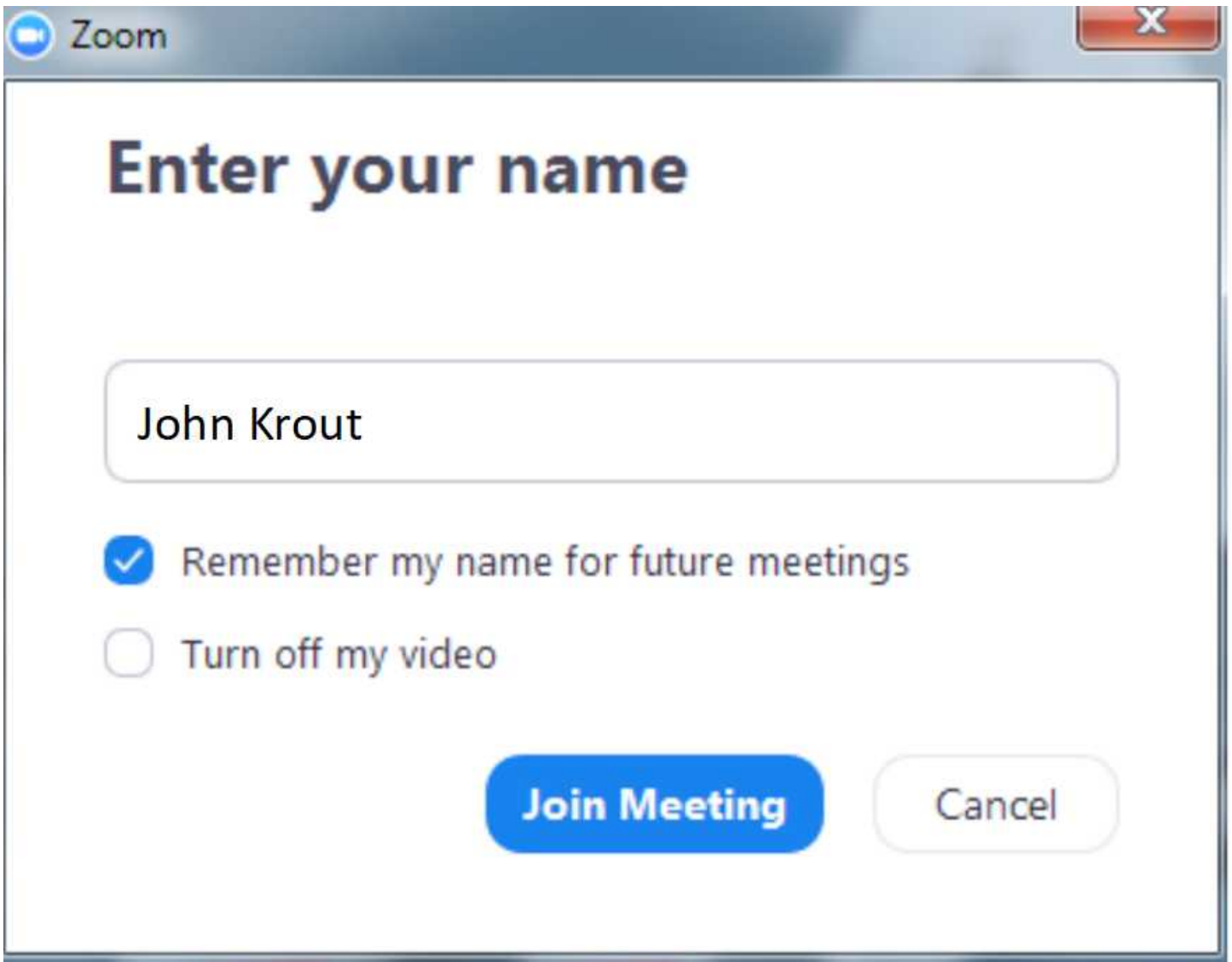
Then click on the Join Meeting button.

Illustration 4

7. The Zoom client willl take a few minutes to attach to the Meeting ID that you specified on the Zoom web site. It displays the progress window shown in **Illustration 5** while doing that.
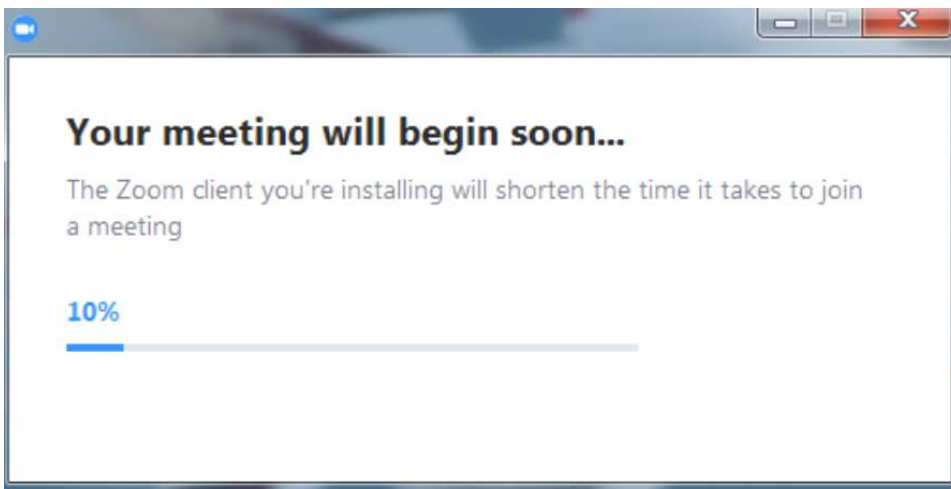

Illustration 5

8. The Zoom meeting main window appears, as shown in **Illustration 6** below. It presents a dialog window as well, asking if you want to listen to the meeting using computer audio. If you listen instead via a phone line, then click ont eh X in the upper right corner to close the dialog window.

If you are listening to meeting audio via computer, then make sure your computer audio volume is not muted and turned up.
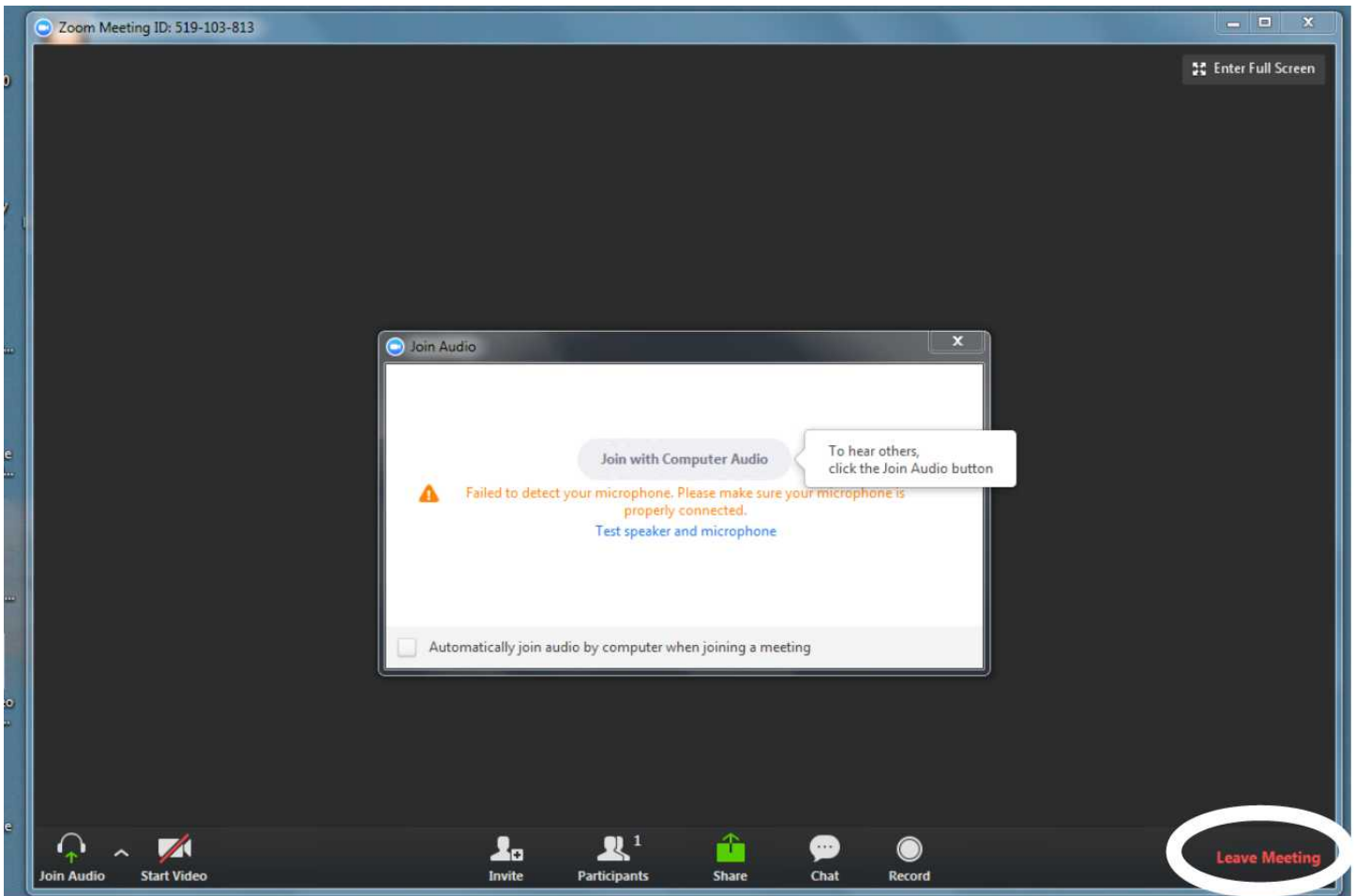

Illustration 6

The Zoom meeting window also includes some other useful gadgets in a bar across the bottom. The most significant is **Leave Meeting**, the red button in the lower right corner, which in the illustration is circled for emphasis. The various buttons may disappear, but will reappear when you move your mouse pointer over that bottom portion of the Zoom meeting window.

Zoom certainly allows you to "join" a meeting that has not started yet. If you have done that, perhaps the night before a PATACS meeting, then the Zoom meeting window will open, but you will see and hear nothing. In that case you can simply click on the Leave Meeting button in the lower right corner, and then follow the instructions below to join the meeting when the meeting actually starts.

JOIN A LATER ZOOM MEETING

If you want to access a Zoom meeting later on, using the same computer, then you already have the Zoom client installed and you can use the Zoom client *without accessing the Zoom.us web site*. The process is a lot quicker than the first-time process, since no download and install is involved.

You will still need to know the Meeting ID number for the meeting you want to join. The PATACS Zoom Meeting ID numbers appear at the top of this document and on the PATACS web site home page.

1. **Illustration 7** shows the Zoom meeting client in a Windows 7 Start menu. That menu item was installed when the Zoom client itself was installed. Select that menu item.
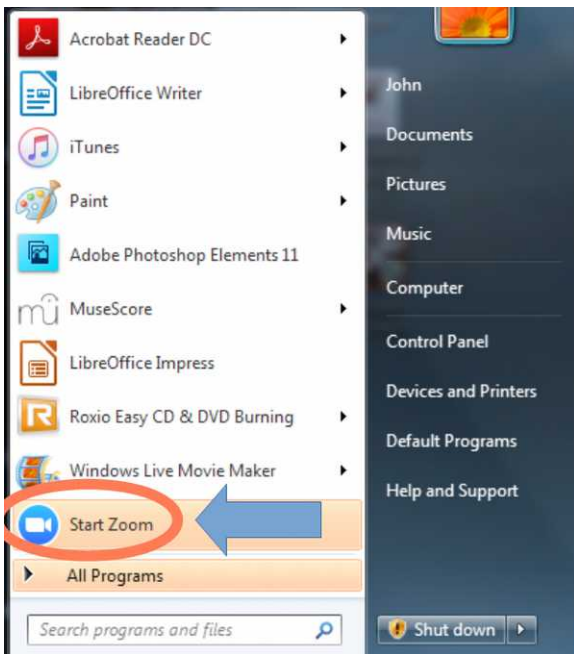

Illustration 7

2. The Zoom Client first window appears, as shown in **Illustration 8**. Click the blue Join a Meeting button. You do *NOT* need to Sign In.

Illustration 8

3. The Zoom Client Join a Meeting window appears, as shown in **Illustration 9** below. You fill in the Meeting ID number, and your full name. Then click on the Join button at the bottom of the window. Note, after you use a Meeting ID once, Zoom remembers it. You can re-use it by tapping on the down arrow at the right of the Meeting ID field, to see a menu of past Meeting IDs.

4. It still takes some time for the Zoom client to connect to the Meeting ID you specified.
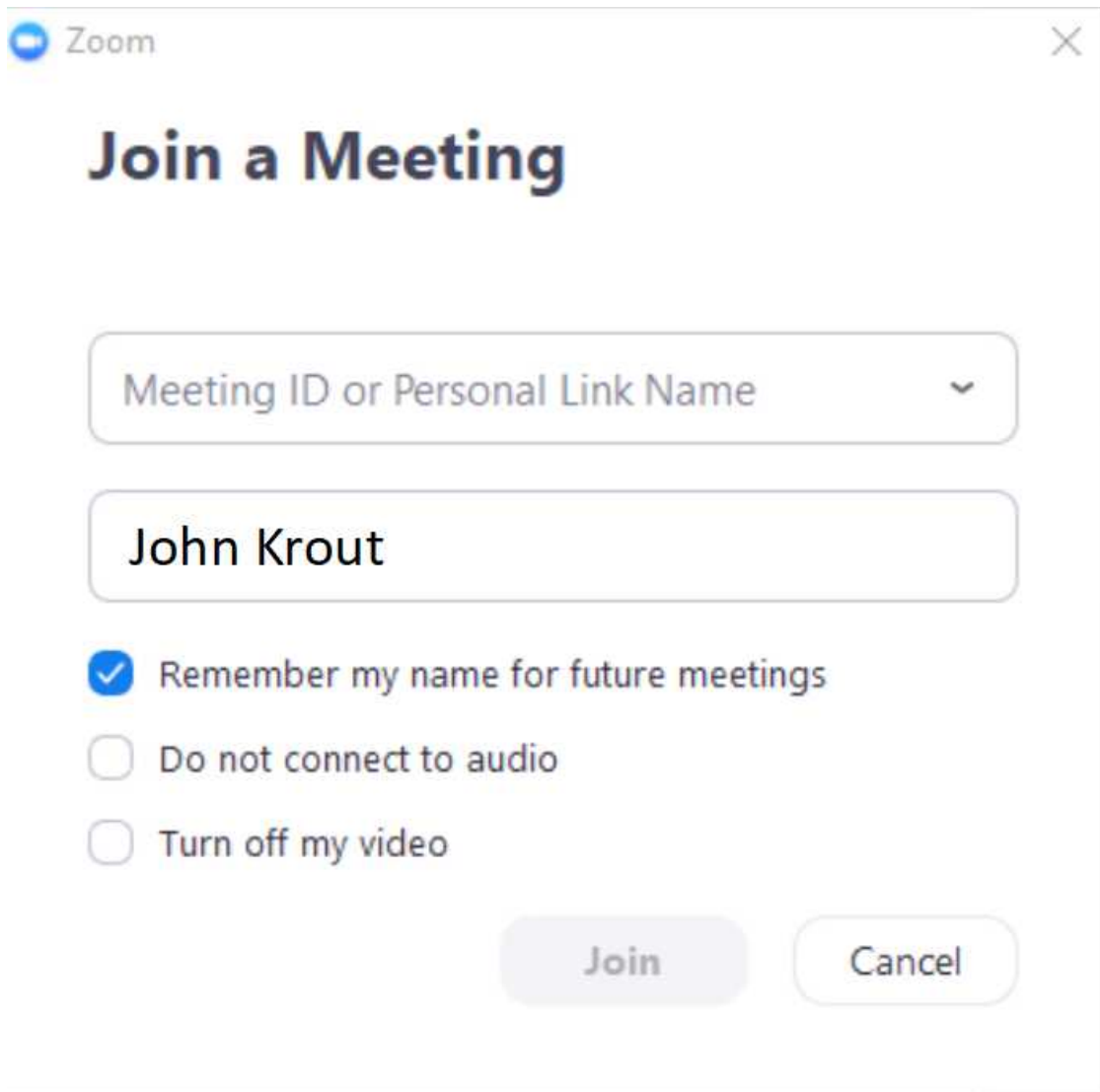
Illustration 9

5. The Zoom meeting window appears, as shown in Illustration 6 above, with all the same buttons.

A TIP

I added two contacts in my cell phone. One I named Fairfax PATACS, and in it I typed the Zoom Meeting ID for that meeting. The other I named Arlington PATACS, and in it I typed the Zoom Meeting ID for that meeting. My contacts list is a handy and always-available reference.

About the Author:

John Krout is a former president of the Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC), a predecessor of PATACS, and a frequent contributor the PATACS Posts newsletter. He has also provided several demos and presentations at PATACS Fairfax meeting. In December 2018, the Association of PC User Groups (APCUG) announced that John won a first prize and a second prize in the 2018 APCUG digital photography contest; those photos are posted on the PATACS web site. He lives in Arlington VA, works as a tech writer for a major maker of automated fingerprint hardware, and hopes to retire by 2021.