

**Wayland Board of Assessors  
Town Building- Assessor's Office  
41 Cochituate Rd Wayland MA 01778  
Monday, October 16, 2017**

Attendees: Chair- S. Rufo, Vice Chair- J. Brodie, S. Glovsky, Director of Assessing E. Brideau and Administrative Assessor J. Marchant

**Meeting called to order**

S. Rufo called the meeting to order at 7:18pm.

**Review of minutes from October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017**

J. Brodie moved to approve the minutes October 2<sup>nd</sup> as submitted. S. Glovsky seconded.

All in favor

**Enter into Executive Session pursuant to MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21a(3) to review and consider for approval and potential release the Executive Session minutes of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 with respect to Pending Appellate Tax Board Cases: 46 Cedar Crest Rd, 42 Shaw Dr and 533 Boston Post Rd (Map 21 Lots 3&4)**

**At 7:19pm, S. Rufo moved to enter into Executive Session pursuant to MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21a(3) to review and consider for approval and potential release the Executive Session minutes of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 with respect to Pending Appellate Tax Board Cases: 46 Cedar Crest Rd, 42 Shaw Dr and 533 Boston Post Rd (Map 21 Lots 3&4)**

J. Brodie seconded

The Chair declared that a public discussion relative to these minutes may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Town.

Roll Call Vote: J. Brodie-yes, S. Rufo-yes, S. Glovsky-yes

The chair invited attendance by Director E. Brideau and Administrative Assessor J. Marchant

The chair stated the board will reconvene in open session in approximately 10 minutes for the purpose of returning to open session.

**Reconvene in Open Session**

The board reconvened in open session at 7:37pm.

While in executive session, the board approved the executive session minutes of October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 and voted not to release them to the public at this time.

**FY18 Interim Assessment: Board discussion on review of values, Informal Hearing dates**

Director Brideau completed review of outliers and looked for trends. 179 residential properties went up more than 10% due to sales, building permits and data collection. For condos, 21 properties increased more than 10% for the same reasons. Overall,

Single family homes are up 3%

Condos are up 6%

Commercial properties are up 3%

*Items in bold include agenda items as posted, motions and votes.*

Postcards will be mailed out Friday with hearings scheduled from October 23- 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Overlay: BOA review of Division of Local Services – IGR 17-23 – Overlay and Overlay Surplus  
BOA review of Overlay Forecast and Overlay Surplus Spreadsheets**

J. Brodie has worked to revise the overlay Forecast schedule to be in accordance with the updated IGR guidelines.

Previously, the form included data from the three most recent years and the previous 3 years excluding recertification years.

Now, the Commissioner needs five years of information to review. The assessor's document has been adjusted to accommodate this. Also added was line 11- Interest on Abatements. This is a new item that needs to be included. Item 10- Certain Taxes- was also discussed.

For Wayland, this change affects the Valor Act participants which are currently three people. The senior work-off program is funded through the Council on Aging budget.

**Collins Center Report Review: Draft - Financial Management Structure  
Draft - Financial Policies**

S. Rufo stated she and Director Brideau went to the BOS meeting to hear the preliminary report. They gave an overview of some of the Collins Center recommendations. Preliminary Overlay Policy was the only item that affected the assessors. S. Rufo will ask them to have a conversation with the BOA by phone or in person. She would like to give them an overview of what the BOA does and their timeline.

The reason for the concern was that the release of overlay money last year was unexpected when it occurred and it affected the FinCom.

The board discussed and reviewed the DLS law for assessors on this matter.

**Correspondence**

Beth Klein, Town Clerk - 2017 Conflict of Interest Annual Acknowledgement

Beth Klein, Town Clerk - Guidelines for Boards and Committees

Beth Klein, Town Clerk – Revisions to Open Meeting Law as of 10/2017

Director Brideau provided these documents to the board members so they could acknowledge their receipt of the documents by signature.

**Documents for BOA Signature (review)**

**Circuit Breaker Applications**

Director Brideau recommended one circuit breaker application for approval. It has been reviewed and meets the criteria. The board signed their approval.

**Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of Meeting, if any**

Director Brideau stated IT informed her today the board members have been assigned Wayland email addresses. Director Brideau handed out envelopes with individual instructions.

**Thoughts and Concerns from BOA members**

None

*Items in bold include agenda items as posted, motions and votes.*

**Public Comment**

None

**Next Meeting:**

November 6<sup>th</sup>

November 20<sup>th</sup> is the scheduled joint meeting with the BOS

**Meeting Adjourned**

**J. Brodie moved to adjourn at 8:24pm. S. Glovsky seconded. All in favor**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica Marchant

Overlay Forecast ( / / )

WORKING PAPERS

STEPS TO DETERMINE FY'18 OVERLAY FORECAST

line #		\$ in FY 13	\$ in FY 14	\$ in FY 15	\$ in FY 16	\$ in FY 17	average of FY13-FY17 to date	FY18 Overlay forecast (see note 10)	FY19 Overlay Preliminary Forecast
	Initial Allowance for Overlay	973,215	614,727	949,529	524,282	524,282	717,207		
1.	Abatements								
2.	Abatements-granted	33,376	34,742	82,177	52,111	37,016	47,884		
3.	Total Abatement-ATB initial liability (note 1)	36,500	245,000	312,600	33,200	24,000	130,260		
3a.	Abatement-ATB initial liability (w/o Telecom)	15,000	223,000	273,600	32,400	23,000	113,400	150,000	
3b.	Abatement-ATB initial liability (Telecom only)	21,500	22,000	39,000	800	800	16,820		
4.	Abatement-other liability (note 2)								
	Real Estate Receivable as of 10/01/2017	3,645	2,111	6,076	6,677	146,441			
	Personal Property Receivable as of 10/01/2017	3,645	2,111	2,134	3,049	14,830			
4.	Abatement-other liability (note 2)	3,645	2,111	8,210	9,726	167,271	36,993	50,000	
5.	Abatement-other (note 3)								
6.	subtotal-abatements	73,521	281,854	402,988	95,037	222,287	215,137		
7.	Exemptions-statutory	55,910	57,769	63,038	53,645	45,672	55,207	55,000	
8.	Exemptions-CB	117,366	133,815	121,183	128,191	98,853	119,882	130,000	
8a.	number of CB applications (notes 4 & 9)	127	141	123	123	93	121		
8b.	Exemptions-Valor Act	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,099	3,000	2,550		
9.	subtotal-exemptions	173,276	191,584	184,221	183,935	147,618	171,925		
10.	Certain taxes (note 5)	0	0	0	0	0	0		
11.	Interest on abatements refunded to taxpayers (note 6)								
12.	Preliminary FY'18 OVERLAY Forecast (note 7)						339,177	600,000	
13.	Tax Rate Rounding (not to exceed) (note 8)								
14.	Final FY'18 OVERLAY Forecast								

notes:

1. assume greatest difference between applicable assessment and taxpayer's estimated value noted on abatement form or for ATB or other documentation
2. "uncollected taxes" (real and personal property) excluding those secured by tax title as of June 30th of the Fiscal Year
3. any significant factors known to the Assessors (i.e. assessments scheduled for Certification)
4. Property Owners can apply for CB match until 12/31
5. Certain taxes that are budgeted elsewhere.
6. Effective FY'18
7. Line 6 plus line 9 - voted on 11/7/16
8. Include sufficient funds to allow rounding of tax rate (per \$1,000) to next whole penny  
This requirement driven by DDR software used in "recap" preparation.
9. FY'18 CB data as of September 2017
10. Forecast for FY'18 budgeting purposes only

WORKING PAPERS

BOA Review of Overlay Surplus - October 1, 2017

WORKING PAPER -

STEPS TO DETERMINE OVERLAY SURPLUS

line #	FY'09	FY'10	FY'11	FY'12	FY'13	FY'14	FY'15	FY'16	FY'17	Total Acct Balance
Initial Allowance for Overlay	1,039,311	1,106,754	1,676,988	1,206,447	973,215	614,727	949,529	524,282.37	620,322.00	8,711,574.71
Recap of Overlay Surplus Released by BOA Vote since 12/11	379,775	766,992	1,412,474	896,663	693,000	300,000	400,000	225,680		5,074,584.63
<b>1. Overlay balance as of October 1, 2017 (note 1)</b>	1,618.01	2,129.08	3,282.94	13,251.84	65,862.84	88,123.00	182,911.42	190,335.58	448,031.49	995,546.20
<b>2. Property tax receivables as of October 1, 2017 (notes 2 &amp; 3)</b>										
<b>3. Potential Abatements</b>										
<b>4. ATB (note 4)</b>										
<b>5. Uncollectable taxes (note 5)</b>	1,618.01	2,129.08	3,282.94	4,151.84	3,645.14	2,111.18	2,198.97	3,048.73	17,857.09	40,042.98
<b>7. subtotal-potential abatements</b>	1,618.01	2,129.08	3,282.94	13,251.84	32,445.14	32,111.18	70,798.97	39,648.73	41,857.09	237,142.98
<b>8. Potential surplus/deficit (notes 6)</b>	-	-	-	-	33,417.70	56,011.82	106,036.30	144,009.86	259,733.50	599,209.18
<b>9. Surplus voted by Assessors</b>										
<b>Potential surplus/deficit after vote</b>										

notes:

1. verify agreement between accounting office records and assessor's records.
2. excluding real property taxes secured by tax title.
3. request data from Collector and verification that records agree with accounting office.
4. assume greatest difference between applicable assessment and taxpayer's estimated value noted on abatement form or for ATB or other documentation
5. review with Collector
6. line 1 minus line 2 minus line 7
7. Circuit Breaker applications are processed through 12/31
8. Historical records show that overlay deficit funds had to be raised on the tax recaps of FY 07 (\$399,674) & FY 08 (\$15,029)

## Brideau, Ellen

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**From:** Klein, Beth  
**Sent:** Friday, September 22, 2017 9:37 AM  
**To:** Department Manager; Abdella, Tom; Ahearne, Oliver; Aida Gennis; Anette Lewis; Anne Harris; Asa Foster; Berry, Dennis; Betsy Soule; Bill Steinberg; Bill Sterling; Brown, Chris; Brud Wright; Carol Martin; Catherine Radmer; Christopher Cullen ; cmsalerno (cmsalerno@comcast.net); Daniel C Hill; Dave Bernstein; Dave Watkins; David C. D'Orlando; Douglas J. Leard (douglearn@realtour4u.com); ebpedersen@comcast.net; Elise Scola; ellen greico; Ellen Tohn (etohn@comcast.net); Knight, Fred; Gretchen Schuler; James Riley; Jeffrey Baron; Joan Bradford; John Schuler; Mishara, Jon; Jonathan Saxton; Judith H. Ide; Jurist, Louis; Kara Brewton; Karlson, Cherry; katherine Gardner-Westcott; Kevin Goodwin; Larry Kiernan; Anderson, Lea; Levine, Doug; Linda Segal; Lowery, Mike; Mary Antes (mantes2@verizon.net); Miranda Jones (mjones@ogglaw.com); Mishara, Jon; Patricia Reinholdt; Baston, Woody; Rachel Bratt; Rebecca MacGregor (becca.macgregor@gmail.com); Turner, Richard; Rita Soulia; Sally Cartwright; sarah.m.greenaway@gmail.com; Sherre Greenbaum (sherregreenbaum@gmail.com); Susan Green; Susan Koffman; Susan Rufo (srufo@comcast.net); Susan Wagner; susan weinstein; suzanne woodruff; Thomas Klem; Toni Moore; Wegerbauer, Mike; zachariah ventress; Zoning Board of Appeal  
**Cc:** Balmer, Nan; DiNapoli, MaryAnn; Gorham, Diane; Marobella, Diane; Unobskey, Arthur  
**Subject:** Guidelines for Boards and Committees  
**Attachments:** GovGuidelines2017.pdf

On June 15<sup>th</sup> 2017, the Board of Selectman adopted guidelines and procedures for all Boards and Committees to follow. A copy of the guidelines is available on the Board of Selectman's web page. In case you have not received it I have attached a copy. Chairs, please forward this to your board and committee members.

Thank you,

*Beth R. Klein*

Beth R. Klein, CMC  
Town Clerk  
Town of Wayland  
41 Cochituate Road,  
Wayland, MA 01778  
508-358-3631  
[bklein@wayland.ma.us](mailto:bklein@wayland.ma.us)  
[www.wayland.ma.us/pages/waylandma\\_clerk/index](http://www.wayland.ma.us/pages/waylandma_clerk/index)

Meeting Notices must be received in the Town Clerks office 30 minutes before the close of business to insure that they will be posted that day. Please email notices to [townclerk@wayland.ma.us](mailto:townclerk@wayland.ma.us).

**TOWN OF WAYLAND  
GOVERNANCE GUIDELINES FOR  
THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND  
APPOINTED BOARDS, COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS  
ADOPTED JUNE 5, 2017**

**1.0 Volunteer Appreciation**

The Board of Selectmen thanks the members of all Boards, Committees and Commissions for giving their valuable time and effort to the improvement of the Wayland community.

**2.0 Authority and Purpose of These Guidelines**

The Wayland Board of Selectmen adopts these Guidelines for the governance of the Board of Selectmen and its appointed Boards, Committees and Commissions, referred to in this document as "public bodies". It is understood that elected public bodies including the Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Library Board of Trustees, Board of Public Works, Planning Board, Recreation Commission and School Committee possess independent authority to adopt separate Governance Guidelines consistent with law.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to promote among the Town's public bodies decision-making that is open, thoughtful, fact-based, respectful and fair, in compliance with Town bylaws and with all state and federal laws.

These Guidelines are superseded when in conflict with any federal or state law or Town by-laws.

The Board of Selectmen will review, revise and distribute the Guidelines annually.

**3.0 Organization**

**3.1 Annual Organization Meeting:** Public bodies must organize annually at the first meeting scheduled after Annual Town Election and Meeting. Public bodies will elect a Chair and any other necessary officers such as a Vice-Chair or Co-Chair, Clerk and Assistant Clerk.

**3.2: Assignment to Department:** Each public body will be assigned to a department of the Town which will provide a secure location to maintain minutes and records.

**3.3: Responsibilities under Charge and Local and State Law:** Each appointed public body will conduct its business under a Town by-law, state statute or under a charge adopted by the Board of Selectmen.

**3.4 Annual Reports:** Under Chapter 53 of the Town Code, all boards, commissions, committees, officers and agents of the Town shall submit a report to the Selectmen, not later than September 30 after the end of each fiscal year for publication each December in the Annual Town Report. The Selectmen shall notify all officers and agents of the Town and the Chairmen of all boards, commissions and committees of the final date for submitting such reports for publication. This notice shall be given by letter mailed in May of each year. If an appointed board, commission or committee of the Town, other than those created under the General Laws of the commonwealth, does not submit its written report on or before such final date for publication in the Annual Town Report, it shall be dissolved, except in such instances where the creating vote specifically provides that it is to report at longer given intervals, or unless the Town at the next annual Town meeting, by vote naming the board, commission or committee, continues it in existence.

Every Annual Report shall contain a section entitled "Current Debt," which shall provide the following information for the debt funded by the Town, with debt remaining and/or with as yet unfunded grants from the commonwealth or the federal government: (1) name of the debt; (2) funds appropriated by identified Town meeting article(s); (3) cumulative funds expended at fiscal year-end; (4) cumulative interest paid at fiscal year-end; and (5) anticipated final cost to the Town, including principal and interest after receipt of funded grants, if any, and date when all financing will have been paid off or otherwise completed.

**3.5 Rules of Procedure and Voting:** Public bodies must establish a quorum before any meeting is called to order. Each public body may establish rules of procedure and voting consistent with local, state and federal law. The rules of procedure should include when public comment may be allowed by the Chair.

**3.6 Advisory Committees:** The Board of Selectmen may appoint advisory committees for a specific purpose under a temporary charge.

**4.0 Role of Members:** A member of any public body will:

1. Respect the role of the Chair in setting agendas and facilitating meetings.
2. Respect decisions of the public body and recognize that members take action as part of a public body and may not conduct Town business independently of the public body except as authorized by a vote of the public body.
3. Recognize that action at an official legal meeting is binding and that an individual member cannot bind the public body outside of such meeting.



4. Not make statements or promises about how he / she will vote on matters that come before the public body until he / she has had an opportunity to hear the pros and cons of the issue during the body's public meeting.
5. Uphold the intent of Executive Sessions and respect the privileged communication that exists in Executive Session, holding it in confidence.
6. Assume a high level of integrity, striving toward fact - based and objective public statements and deliberations. Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed.
7. As a general rule, work with Town staff at the direction of the public body so that Town staff are not subject to conflicting direction.
8. If appointed by a majority of the public body, serve as a liaison to other public bodies.
9. Fulfill any training the Board of Selectmen may require so members can effectively fulfill their duties. Training may be provided at Town building, over the internet, or may require out of Town travel or require multiple sessions. Whenever training is required by the Town so that a volunteer can serve on a public body, the Town will pay for the costs of tuition and travel. All such costs must be approved in advance by a Department Head before the costs are incurred.
10. Be sworn in by the Town Clerk or Assistant Town Clerk after appointment or election and submit a letter of resignation to the Office of the Town Clerk when no longer willing or able to serve. New members of public bodies cannot vote until sworn in by the Town Clerk or Assistant Town Clerk. If a member wishes to resign before the end of a term he or she must submit to the Office of the Town Clerk a signed letter of resignation. The resignation is effective upon receipt by the Office of the Town Clerk unless a different date is specified. Upon expiration of a term, appointed members will continue to hold office until a successor is appointed.

**5.0 Role of Chair and Vice Chair:** The Chair will set meeting agendas, convene all meetings, and execute documents as authorized by the public body. The Chair will act only under authority provided by a quorum of the public body. The Chair will serve as the public body's primary contact with Town staff. As a general rule, the Chair will solicit the opinions of all members prior to stating his or her personal opinion on any agenda item before the public body. The Chair will be responsible for ensuring the proper preparation and disposition of all minutes under the Open Meeting Law. The Vice Chair will fulfill the duties of the Chair in his or her absence.

**6.0 Role of Clerk:** Although Town staff may record minutes for some public bodies, the public body is encouraged to elect a Clerk or individual member who takes responsibility for ensuring minutes are recorded, created and submitted for approval and

filed along with supporting documents as a permanent record in the office of the assigned Town department.

## **6.0 Open Meeting Law**

**6.1 Requirement to comply with the Open Meeting Law:** Public bodies must comply with all parts of the Open Meeting Law. Public bodies subject to the Open Meeting Law include any sub-committee of two or more members assigned by the public body to conduct business. Please refer to the MA Attorney General's Open Meeting Law Guide which is available on the Town website and through the Wayland Town Clerk and includes the following information important for members to know:

1. Definition of a public body
2. Definition of a meeting / 5 exceptions to the definition
3. Definition of a meeting quorum
4. Requirements for posting meetings
5. Ten legal purposes for executive sessions
6. Requirements to allow remote participation
7. Required public participation.
8. Required records for Open and Executive Sessions
9. Open Meeting Law complaint process

The Town Administrator is available to provide or obtain assistance on Open Meeting Law questions. You may also contact the Division of Open Government at (617) 963-2540 or e-mail [openmeeting@state.ma.us](mailto:openmeeting@state.ma.us).

**6.2 Meeting Notices:** All public bodies must comply with the Open Meeting Law, including but not limited to filing meeting agendas with the Town Clerk at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays are excluded in the calculation of the 48 hours. The agenda may be filed with the Town Clerk in person or e-mailed to the Town Clerk at [Townclerk@wayland.ma.us](mailto:Townclerk@wayland.ma.us) . Agendas must be received by the Town Clerk at least 30 minutes before the end of business in order to be posted the same day. Agendas received after the close of business will not be posted until the next day. Please contact the Town Clerk's office if you have a late filing. The agenda must include a list of topics that is sufficiently specific to reasonably inform the public of the items to be discussed at the meeting. The agenda must also include any Executive Sessions planned, citing one of the 10 legal purposes for calling an Executive Session.

**6.3 Revised Agendas:** If an agenda item is received by the Chair within 48 hours of a posted meeting, and the agenda item could not be reasonably anticipated by the Chair more than 48 hours before the meeting, the Chair may revise the posted agenda to include the new agenda item. It is preferred that agendas are revised only when the agenda item arises because of an emergency, which is defined as a sudden and generally unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances, demanding

immediate action. All other matters should be heard at a later meeting of the public body. If you are filing a revised agenda it should be marked "REVISED" and any changes or additions should be highlighted.

**6.4 Requirement for Meeting Minutes:** The Open Meeting Law requires public bodies to create and approve minutes in a timely manner. The Public Records Law requires that existing minutes be made available to the public within 10 days upon request, whether these minutes have been approved or are in draft form. Materials or other exhibits used by the public body in an open meeting must also be made available to the public within 10 days of request.. Minutes of all staffed public bodies will be posted to the website by departmental staff. Minutes of all other public bodies will be will be emailed to [townclerk@wayland.ma.us](mailto:townclerk@wayland.ma.us) be posted on the Town website.

**6.5 Contents of Minutes:** Minutes must include the name of the public body, the date, time, and place of the meeting, the names of members present and absent, the names of staff present, and the substance of all discussion including all subjects acted upon or heard. Minutes must include a full and complete record of all motions proposed for vote and will include the exact vote, the names of the mover and the seconder for each motion, and the names of those voting against each motion. A verbatim record of meetings is not required.

**6.6 Draft Minutes:** Once created, draft regular meeting minutes are a public record available to the public, even if the minutes have not been presented at a meeting.

**6.7 Executive Session Minutes:** Minutes must be created for all Executive Sessions. Executive Session Minutes must not be released to the public until the reason for calling an Executive Session has ended, after which Executive Session Minutes must be reviewed and voted for approval and release by the public body.

**6.8 Recording of Meetings:** Any member of the public has the right to make an audio or video recording of an open session of a public meeting, but must notify the Chair before recording. The Chair must inform attendees of any such recording at the beginning of the meeting including that that the meeting will be broadcast on the Way-Cam government access channel. The Chair may impose reasonable requirements regarding audio or video equipment so recording does not interfere with the meeting.

**6.9 Public Participation:** Under the Open Meeting Law, the public is permitted to attend open meetings of public bodies. The public is excluded from an executive session that is called for a valid legal purpose cited in the agenda. The amount of time a member of the public will be allowed to speak to a public body will be determined at the discretion of the Chair. While the public is permitted to attend an open meeting, an individual may not address the public body without permission of the Chair. An individual is not permitted to disrupt a meeting of a public body, and at

the request of the Chair, all members of the public will be silent. If after clear warning, a person is disruptive, the Chair may order the person to leave the meeting, and if the person does not leave, the Chair may authorize a police officer to remove the person.

**6.10 Remote Participation at Meetings:** The Town of Wayland permits remote participation. Members of Town boards and committees can participate and vote by teleconference, audio-conference or other means that allows all persons present, including the audience and the member participating remotely, to hear the proceedings. Acceptable reasons for remote participation under the regulations include personal illness, personal disability, emergency, military service and geographic distance.

All votes taken at such meetings where a member participates remotely must be taken by roll call vote and a quorum of members must otherwise be present, not including the remote participant. No remote participant can chair a meeting.

**6.11 Open Meeting Law Complaint Process:** Individuals who allege a violation of the Open Meeting Law must first file a complaint with the public body alleged to have violated the OML within 30 days of the date of the violation or the date the complainant could have reasonably known of the violation. The full complaint process, including the required response of the public body to the complainant within 14 days of receipt of the complaint is included in the Attorney General's Open Meeting Law Guide. Please provide a copy of all Open Meeting Law complaints to the Town Administrator's Office.

Within 14 business days of the date on which the complaint was filed, the public body must review the complaint and send to the Attorney General's Office (AGO) a copy of the complaint along with a description of any action taken to resolve the issue that was raised by the complaint. Within seven business days of the date that the complaint was filed, the public body may request additional information from the person making the complaint if necessary to resolve the complaint. The person making the complaint shall provide the additional information to the public body within 10 business days, and the public body shall have 10 additional business days (total 24 business days from the date complaint was originally filed) to act on the complaint and notify the AGO.

The public body may request additional time to consider taking remedial action and must make that request in writing to the AGO, to the Attention of the Director of the Division of Open Government. The AGO may, at its discretion, grant additional time to the public body if it determines there is a showing of good cause to grant the extension.

## **7.0 Use of E-Mail to Conduct Business**

**7.1 E-Mail and Public Records Law:** E-mail communication created or received by a member of a public body while acting in his or her capacity as a member of the public body, is considered a public record and is subject to a public records request under the Public Records Law even if the e-mail is received by or created on a private computer or sent to only one individual. Over time, the Town will assign an e-mail address to all members of appointed and elected boards and committees. It is requested that any volunteer who does not have a Town e-mail address create a new separate e-mail account to be used for Town business only.

**7.2 E-Mail and Open Meeting Law:** Whenever one member of a public body uses e-mail to discuss the public body's business (except for administrative matters such as scheduling and the transmission of documents) with a quorum of the members, it constitutes "deliberation" and is in direct violation of the Open Meeting Law. E-mail communication between less than a quorum of a public body is also in violation of the Open Meeting Law if the e-mail between less than a quorum of members is later forwarded to or discussed with additional members outside of a public meeting, thus unintentionally creating a quorum.

**7.3 Board of Selectmen Guideline on E-Mail:** To avoid violations of the Open Meeting Law and the Public Records Law, it is preferred that e-mail between members of the Town's public bodies be restricted to scheduling meetings and distribution of agendas, documents and reports.

## **8.0 Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct**

**8.1 Code of Ethics:** All members of public bodies are sworn in by the Town Clerk to uphold all state and local laws applicable to the public body's jurisdiction. Members must comply with the state ethics law (MGL Chapter 268A) regarding the conduct of public officials. Members must complete required ethics training and on-line tests. A member is required under the law to not vote on any matter in which the member or an immediate family member has a financial interest. Members are encouraged to recuse themselves if there is an "appearance" of a conflict of interest.

**8.2 Standard of Conduct:** All members will treat the public, applicants before the public body, Town employees and other members with respect and courtesy. The members and Chair of a public body should take time to listen to individuals speaking to the body. The Chair should make sure members of the public who are present also accord those speaking with respect and an opportunity to be heard uninterrupted.

Bullying by public officials (including committee, board and commission members and staff) while in the course of public business is not tolerated. Bullying is the repeated

use of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, that:

1. Causes physical or emotional harm to another party or that party's property;
2. Places another party in reasonable fear of harm or of damage to his or her property;
3. Creates a hostile environment within Town Building or other Town workplace;  
OR
4. Materially and substantially disrupts the work of the multi-member body, Town departments or the orderly process of government.

**8.3: Absences:** The absence without appropriate explanation of any member of an appointed body from a majority of meetings held over a one year period or from three consecutive meetings may serve to vacate the office. The decision to recommend that the office be vacated will be made by a majority vote of other members of the public body and then transmitted to the Board of Selectmen.

**8.4 Members are Bound by Applicable Personnel Policies and Law:** Members of public bodies, when acting in their official capacity, are subject to any applicable state law and Town policies including those prohibiting sexual harassment, discrimination and workplace violence. Any allegation of misconduct made by the public, Town staff or a fellow member will be reported immediately to the Town Administrator.

**8.5 Litigation against Town by a Member of an Appointed Public Body:** An appointed member of any appointed public body may be temporarily suspended by the Board of Selectmen during a lawsuit filed by the member against the Town in a court of competent jurisdiction in the state of MA.

**8.6 Removal under this Section:** The Board of Selectmen, under such procedures it may adopt, may remove a member from a public body for violations of this section.

**9.0 Town Meeting and Public Bodies:** Upon a majority vote, public bodies may sponsor and submit to the Board of Selectmen articles for the Board's consideration for inclusion in Annual and Special Town Meeting warrants. Articles submitted by committees that are advisory to the Selectmen shall be submitted and sponsored by the Board of Selectmen.

#### **10.0 Policy on Legal Services**

All requests for legal opinions will be made through the Town Administrator under the Board's policy on legal affairs of the Town.

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL POLICIES REFERENCED ABOVE:**

1. Remote Participation Policy; 2. Legal Affairs Policy

DATE OF ADOPTION / AMENDMENT: JUNE 5, 2017

**Brideau, Ellen**

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**From:** Klein, Beth  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 23, 2017 9:40 AM  
**To:** Employees; Department Manager; waystaff (waystaff@minlib.net); Abdella, Tom; Ahearne, Oliver; Aida Gennis; Anette Lewis; Anne Harris; Asa Foster; Berry, Dennis; Betsy Soule; Bill Steinberg; Bill Sterling; Brown, Chris; Brud Wright; Carol Martin; Catherine Radmer; Christopher Cullen ; cmsalerno (cmsalerno@comcast.net); Daniel C Hill; Dave Bernstein; David C. D'Orlando; Douglas J. Leard (dougleard@realtour4u.com); ebpedersen@comcast.net; Elise Scola; ellen greico; Ellen Tohn (etohn@comcast.net); Knight, Fred; Gretchen Schuler; James Riley; Jeffrey Baron; Joan Bradford; John Schuler; Mishara, Jon; Jonathan Saxton; Judith H. Ide; Jurist, Louis; Kara Brewton; Karlson, Cherry; katherine Gardner-Westcott; Kevin Goodwin; Larry Kiernan; Anderson, Lea; Levine, Doug; Linda Segal; Lowery, Mike; Mary Antes (mantes2@verizon.net); Miranda Jones (mjones@ogglaw.com); Mishara, Jon; Patricia Reinholdt; Baston, Woody; Rachel Bratt; Rebecca MacGregor (becca.macgregor@gmail.com); Turner, Richard; Rita Soulia; Sally Cartwright; sarah.m.greenaway@gmail.com; Sherre Greenbaum (sherregreenbaum@gmail.com); Susan Green; Susan Koffman; Susan Rufo (srufo@comcast.net); Susan Wagner; susan weinstein; suzanne woodruff; Thomas Klem; Toni Moore; Wegerbauer, Mike; zachariah ventress; Zoning Board of Appeal  
**Cc:** Senchyshyn, John; Lyons, Reid; LeishaSimon; Raymond, Sandy  
**Subject:** 2017-Conflict of Interest Yearly Reminder For all Municipal Employees  
**Attachments:** Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law for Municipal Employees revised 2016.pdf; Receipt Conflict of Interest 2016.pdf; COI-ltr to employees-8.1.17.doc  
**Importance:** High

TOWN OF WAYLAND

The Conflict of Interest Law requires that every state, county, and municipal employee must be given a summary of the conflict of interest law prepared by the Ethics Commission on a yearly basis.

You do not have to be a fulltime, paid municipal employee to be considered a municipal employee for conflict of interest purposes. Anyone performing services for a city or town or holding a municipal position, whether paid or unpaid, including full- and part-time municipal employees, elected officials, volunteers, and consultants, is a municipal employee under the conflict of interest law.

The Town Clerk is responsible for the distribution of the Summary of Conflict Law to all municipal employees on a yearly basis. The Town Clerk must also receive an acknowledgement from the employee that they have received a copy of the Summary (the Receipt). The Receipt can be submitted either electronically or by paper. A copy of the Summary and Receipt are attached above or can found on the links below.

Every two years each Town employee, board and committee member must retake the Conflict of Interest training. If you last took it in in 2015, then you will need to retake it within the next 30 days. If you

completed the Training after 2015 you must retake it two years from that date. After completing the on-line training, print out the Certificate of Completion and either give it to your supervisor or to the Town Clerk. Please remember that your name must be printed on the Certificate. Handwritten certificates will not be accepted. The State recommends not using google chrome. If you are having trouble printing, see the attached Notice To Municipal Employees or contact the Town Clerk by email.

In Order to expedite the process a website has been set up for Town employees and volunteers. Click on this link [http://www.wayland.ma.us/Pages/WaylandMA\\_HR/Conflict](http://www.wayland.ma.us/Pages/WaylandMA_HR/Conflict).

If you are a School Employee or volunteer please click here: [http://www.wayland.k12.ma.us/administration/technology\\_department/mandated\\_employee\\_training](http://www.wayland.k12.ma.us/administration/technology_department/mandated_employee_training)

**Note:** School employees must complete the requirements and forward the Certificates of Compliance directly to the HR director, J. Reid Lyons.

Thank you for your assistance.

*Beth R. Klein*

Town Clerk

Town of Wayland

41 Cochituate Road,

Wayland, MA 01778

508-358-3631

[bklein@wayland.ma.us](mailto:bklein@wayland.ma.us)

[www.wayland.ma.us/pages/waylandma\\_clerk/index](http://www.wayland.ma.us/pages/waylandma_clerk/index)



Version 7: Revised November 14, 2016

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, an employee at \_\_\_\_\_,  
*(first and last name)* *(name of municipal dept.)*

Hereby acknowledge that I received a copy of the summary of the conflict of interest law for

municipal employees, revised November 14, 2016, on \_\_\_\_\_  
*(date)*

*Municipal employees should complete the acknowledgment of receipt and return it to the individual who provided them with a copy of the summary. Alternatively, municipal employees may send an email acknowledging receipt of the summary to the individual who provided them with a copy of it.*



# TOWN OF WAYLAND

MASSACHUSETTS

01778

TOWN CLERK

Beth R. Klein

[bklein@wayland.ma.us](mailto:bklein@wayland.ma.us)

ASSISTANT TOWN CLERK

Diane M. Gorham

[dgorham@wayland.ma.us](mailto:dgorham@wayland.ma.us)

TOWN BUILDING

41 COCHITUATE ROAD

Wayland, MA 01778

TEL: 508-358-3630

508-358-3631

FAX: 508-358-1683

[www.wayland.ma.us](http://www.wayland.ma.us)

**Date: August 14, 2017**

**TO: All Wayland Municipal Employees, Boards, Committee, and Commissions**

**From: Beth R. Klein, Town Clerk**

**RE: Conflict of Interest Law On-Line Training Requirements**

The Conflict of Interest Law requires that every state, county, and municipal employee must be given a Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law prepared by the Ethics Commission on an annual basis.

You do not have to be a fulltime, paid municipal employee to be considered a municipal employee for conflict of interest purposes. Anyone performing services for a city or town or holding a municipal position, whether paid or unpaid, including full- and part-time municipal employees, elected officials, volunteers, and consultants, is a municipal employee under the conflict of interest law.

1) Every new employee or board member is required to receive a copy of the Summary of Conflict Law and to take the On-Line Training within 30 days of employment or appointment. Every August there after the Town Clerk will email a new copy of the Summary of Conflict Law to all municipal employees. A copy of the Summary is attached or can be downloaded below. The Town Clerk must also receive an acknowledgement from the employee that they have received a copy of the Summary (Receipt). The **Receipt** can be submitted either electronically or by paper. A return email acknowledging receipt is sufficient to comply with the statute.

2) Every two years all Municipal Employee's must retake the Conflict of Interest On-Line Training. If you have taken it in 2015, then you will have to take it again in 2017. After completing the on-line training, print out the Certificate of Completion and either give it to your supervisor or send it to the Town Clerk's Office. Please remember that your name must be printed on the Certificate. Handwritten certificates will not be accepted. **If you are having trouble printing, see the attached Notice to Municipal Employees.** We also recommend keeping a copy for your own records, so you will know when you have to retake it.

In Order to expedite the process a website has been set up for Town employees and volunteers. Click on this link [http://www.wayland.ma.us/Pages/WaylandMA\\_HR/Conflict](http://www.wayland.ma.us/Pages/WaylandMA_HR/Conflict).

If you are a School Employee or volunteer please click here:

[http://www.wayland.k12.ma.us/administration/technology\\_department/mandated\\_employee\\_training](http://www.wayland.k12.ma.us/administration/technology_department/mandated_employee_training)

If you have any other questions please contact the Town Clerk or the Assistant Town Clerk by email.

# Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law for Municipal Employees

This summary of the conflict of interest law, General Laws chapter 268A, is intended to help municipal employees understand how that law applies to them. This summary is not a substitute for legal advice, nor does it mention every aspect of the law that may apply in a particular situation. Municipal employees can obtain free confidential advice about the conflict of interest law from the Commission's Legal Division at our website, phone number, and address above. Municipal counsel may also provide advice.

The conflict of interest law seeks to prevent conflicts between private interests and public duties, foster integrity in public service, and promote the public's trust and confidence in that service by placing restrictions on what municipal employees may do on the job, after hours, and after leaving public service, as described below. The sections referenced below are sections of G.L. c. 268A.

When the Commission determines that the conflict of interest law has been violated, it can impose a civil penalty of up to \$10,000 (\$25,000 for bribery cases) for each violation. In addition, the Commission can order the violator to repay any economic advantage he gained by the violation, and to make restitution to injured third parties. Violations of the conflict of interest law can also be prosecuted criminally.

## I. Are you a municipal employee for conflict of interest law purposes?

You do not have to be a full-time, paid municipal employee to be considered a municipal employee for conflict of interest purposes. Anyone performing services for a city or town or holding a municipal position, whether paid or unpaid, including full- and part-time municipal employees, elected officials, volunteers, and consultants, is a municipal employee under the conflict of interest law. An employee of a private firm can also be a municipal employee, if the private firm has a contract with the city or town and the employee is a "key employee" under the contract, meaning the town has specifically contracted for her services. The law also covers private parties who engage in impermissible dealings with municipal employees, such as offering bribes or illegal gifts. Town meeting members and charter commission members are not municipal employees under the conflict of interest law.

## II. On-the-job restrictions.

**(a) Bribes. Asking for and taking bribes is prohibited. (See Section 2)**

A bribe is anything of value corruptly received by a municipal employee in exchange for the employee being influenced in his official actions. Giving, offering, receiving, or asking for a bribe is illegal.

Bribes are more serious than illegal gifts because they involve corrupt intent. In other words, the municipal employee intends to sell his office by agreeing to do or not do some official act, and the giver intends to influence him to do so. Bribes of any value are illegal.

**(b) Gifts and gratuities. Asking for or accepting a gift because of your official position, or because of something you can do or have done in your official position, is prohibited. (See Sections 3, 23(b)(2), and 26)**

Municipal employees may not accept gifts and gratuities valued at \$50 or more given to influence their official actions or because of their official position. Accepting a gift intended to reward past official action or to bring about future official action is illegal, as is giving such gifts. Accepting a gift given to you because of the municipal position you hold is also illegal. Meals, entertainment event tickets, golf, gift baskets, and payment of travel expenses can all be illegal gifts if given in connection with official action or position, as can anything worth \$50 or more. A number of smaller gifts together worth \$50 or more may also violate these sections.

*Example of violation:* A town administrator accepts reduced rental payments from developers.

*Example of violation:* A developer offers a ski trip to a school district employee who oversees the developer's work for the school district.

**Regulatory exemptions.** There are situations in which a municipal employee's receipt of a gift does not present a genuine risk of a conflict of interest, and may in fact advance the public interest. The Commission has created exemptions permitting giving and receiving gifts in these situations. One commonly used exemption permits municipal employees to accept payment of travel-related expenses when doing so advances a public purpose. Another commonly used exemption permits municipal employees to accept payment of costs involved in attendance at educational and training programs. Other exemptions are listed on the Commission's website.

*Example where there is no violation:* A fire truck manufacturer offers to pay the travel expenses of a fire chief to a trade show where the chief can examine various kinds of fire-fighting equipment that the town may purchase. The chief fills out a disclosure form and obtains prior approval from his appointing authority.

*Example where there is no violation:* A town treasurer attends a two-day annual school featuring multiple substantive seminars on issues relevant to treasurers. The annual school is paid for in part by banks that do business with town treasurers. The treasurer is only required to make a disclosure if one of the sponsoring banks has official business before her in the six months before or after the annual school.

**(c) Misuse of position. Using your official position to get something you are not entitled to, or to get someone else something they are not entitled to, is prohibited. Causing someone else to do these things is also prohibited. (See Sections 23(b)(2) and 26)**

A municipal employee may not use her official position to get something worth \$50 or more that would not be properly available to other similarly situated individuals. Similarly, a municipal employee may not use her official position to get something worth \$50 or more for someone else that would not be properly available to other similarly situated individuals. Causing someone else to do these things is also prohibited.

*Example of violation:* A full-time town employee writes a novel on work time, using her office computer, and directing her secretary to proofread the draft.

*Example of violation:* A city councilor directs subordinates to drive the councilor's wife to and from the grocery store.

*Example of violation:* A mayor avoids a speeding ticket by asking the police officer who stops him, "Do you know who I am?" and showing his municipal I.D.

**(d) Self-dealing and nepotism. Participating as a municipal employee in a matter in which you, your immediate family, your business organization, or your future employer has a financial interest is prohibited. (See Section 19)**

A municipal employee may not participate in any particular matter in which he or a member of his immediate family (parents, children, siblings, spouse, and spouse's parents, children, and siblings) has a financial interest. He also may not participate in any particular matter in which a prospective employer, or a business organization of which he is a director, officer, trustee, or employee has a financial interest. Participation includes discussing as well as voting on a matter, and delegating a matter to someone else.

A financial interest may create a conflict of interest whether it is large or small, and positive or negative. In other words, it does not matter if a lot of money is involved or only a little. It also does not matter if you are putting money into your pocket or taking it out. If you, your immediate family, your business, or your employer have or has a

financial interest in a matter, you may not participate. The financial interest must be direct and immediate or reasonably foreseeable to create a conflict. Financial interests which are remote, speculative or not sufficiently identifiable do not create conflicts.

***Example of violation:*** A school committee member's wife is a teacher in the town's public schools. The school committee member votes on the budget line item for teachers' salaries.

***Example of violation:*** A member of a town affordable housing committee is also the director of a non-profit housing development corporation. The non-profit makes an application to the committee, and the member/director participates in the discussion.

***Example:*** A planning board member lives next door to property where a developer plans to construct a new building. Because the planning board member owns abutting property, he is presumed to have a financial interest in the matter. He cannot participate unless he provides the State Ethics Commission with an opinion from a qualified independent appraiser that the new construction will not affect his financial interest.

In many cases, where not otherwise required to participate, a municipal employee may comply with the law by simply not participating in the particular matter in which she has a financial interest. She need not give a reason for not participating.

There are several exemptions to this section of the law. An appointed municipal employee may file a written disclosure about the financial interest with his appointing authority, and seek permission to participate notwithstanding the conflict. The appointing authority may grant written permission if she determines that the financial interest in question is not so substantial that it is likely to affect the integrity of his services to the municipality. Participating without disclosing the financial interest is a violation. Elected employees cannot use the disclosure procedure because they have no appointing authority.

***Example where there is no violation:*** An appointed member of the town zoning advisory committee, which will review and recommend changes to the town's by-laws with regard to a commercial district, is a partner at a company that owns commercial property in the district. Prior to participating in any committee discussions, the member files a disclosure with the zoning board of appeals that appointed him to his position, and that board gives him a written determination authorizing his participation, despite his company's financial interest. There is no violation.

There is also an exemption for both appointed and elected employees where the employee's task is to address a matter of general policy and the employee's financial interest is shared with a substantial portion (generally 10% or more) of the town's population, such as, for instance, a financial interest in real estate tax rates or municipal utility rates.

**Regulatory exemptions.** In addition to the statutory exemptions just mentioned, the Commission has created several regulatory exemptions permitting municipal employees to participate in particular matters notwithstanding the presence of a financial interest in certain very specific situations when permitting them to do so advances a public purpose. There is an exemption permitting school committee members to participate in setting school fees that will affect their own children if they make a prior written disclosure. There is an exemption permitting town clerks to perform election-related functions even when they, or their immediate family members, are on the ballot, because clerks' election-related functions are extensively regulated by other laws. There is also an exemption permitting a person serving as a member of a municipal board pursuant to a legal requirement that the board have members with a specified affiliation to participate fully in determinations of general policy by the board, even if the entity with which he is affiliated has a financial interest in the matter. Other exemptions are listed in the Commission's regulations, available on the Commission's website.

***Example where there is no violation:*** A municipal Shellfish Advisory Board has been created to provide advice to the Board of Selectmen on policy issues related to shellfishing. The Advisory Board is required to have members who are currently commercial fishermen. A board member who is a commercial fisherman may participate in determinations of general policy in which he has a financial interest common to all commercial fishermen, but may not participate in determinations in which he alone has a financial interest, such as the extension of his own individual permits or leases.

**(e) False claims. Presenting a false claim to your employer for a payment or benefit is prohibited, and causing someone else to do so is also prohibited. (See Sections 23(b)(4) and 26)**

A municipal employee may not present a false or fraudulent claim to his employer for any payment or benefit worth \$50 or more, or cause another person to do so.

***Example of violation:*** A public works director directs his secretary to fill out time sheets to show him as present at work on days when he was skiing.

**(f) Appearance of conflict. Acting in a manner that would make a reasonable person think you can be improperly influenced is prohibited. (See Section 23(b)(3))**

A municipal employee may not act in a manner that would cause a reasonable person to think that she would show favor toward someone or that she can be improperly influenced. Section 23(b)(3) requires a municipal employee to consider whether her relationships and affiliations could prevent her from acting fairly and objectively when she performs her duties for a city or town. If she cannot be fair and objective because of a relationship or affiliation, she should not perform her duties. However, a municipal

employee, whether elected or appointed, can avoid violating this provision by making a public disclosure of the facts. An appointed employee must make the disclosure in writing to his appointing official.

*Example where there is no violation:* A developer who is the cousin of the chair of the conservation commission has filed an application with the commission. A reasonable person could conclude that the chair might favor her cousin. The chair files a written disclosure with her appointing authority explaining her relationship with her cousin prior to the meeting at which the application will be considered. There is no violation of Sec. 23(b)(3).

**(g) Confidential information. Improperly disclosing or personally using confidential information obtained through your job is prohibited. (See Section 23(c))**

Municipal employees may not improperly disclose confidential information, or make personal use of non-public information they acquired in the course of their official duties to further their personal interests.

### III. After-hours restrictions.

**(a) Taking a second paid job that conflicts with the duties of your municipal job is prohibited. (See Section 23(b)(1))**

A municipal employee may not accept other paid employment if the responsibilities of the second job are incompatible with his or her municipal job.

*Example:* A police officer may not work as a paid private security guard in the town where he serves because the demands of his private employment would conflict with his duties as a police officer.

**(b) Divided loyalties. Receiving pay from anyone other than the city or town to work on a matter involving the city or town is prohibited. Acting as agent or attorney for anyone other than the city or town in a matter involving the city or town is also prohibited whether or not you are paid. (See Sec. 17)**

Because cities and towns are entitled to the undivided loyalty of their employees, a municipal employee may not be paid by other people and organizations in relation to a matter if the city or town has an interest in the matter. In addition, a municipal employee may not act on behalf of other people and organizations or act as an attorney for other people and organizations in which the town has an interest. Acting as agent includes



contacting the municipality in person, by phone, or in writing; acting as a liaison; providing documents to the city or town; and serving as spokesman.

A municipal employee may always represent his own personal interests, even before his own municipal agency or board, on the same terms and conditions that other similarly situated members of the public would be allowed to do so. A municipal employee may also apply for building and related permits on behalf of someone else and be paid for doing so, unless he works for the permitting agency, or an agency which regulates the permitting agency.

**Example of violation:** A full-time health agent submits a septic system plan that she has prepared for a private client to the town's board of health.

**Example of violation:** A planning board member represents a private client before the board of selectmen on a request that town meeting consider rezoning the client's property.

While many municipal employees earn their livelihood in municipal jobs, some municipal employees volunteer their time to provide services to the town or receive small stipends. Others, such as a private attorney who provides legal services to a town as needed, may serve in a position in which they may have other personal or private employment during normal working hours. In recognition of the need not to unduly restrict the ability of town volunteers and part-time employees to earn a living, the law is less restrictive for "special" municipal employees than for other municipal employees.

The status of "special" municipal employee has to be assigned to a municipal position by vote of the board of selectmen, city council, or similar body. A position is eligible to be designated as "special" if it is unpaid, or if it is part-time and the employee is allowed to have another job during normal working hours, or if the employee was not paid for working more than 800 hours during the preceding 365 days. It is the position that is designated as "special" and not the person or persons holding the position. Selectmen in towns of 10,000 or fewer are automatically "special"; selectman in larger towns cannot be "specials."

If a municipal position has been designated as "special," an employee holding that position may be paid by others, act on behalf of others, and act as attorney for others with respect to matters before municipal boards other than his own, provided that he has not officially participated in the matter, and the matter is not now, and has not within the past year been, under his official responsibility.

**Example:** A school committee member who has been designated as a special municipal employee appears before the board of health on behalf of a client of his private law practice, on a matter that he has not participated in or had responsibility for as a school committee member. There is no conflict. However, he may not appear before the school

committee, or the school department, on behalf of a client because he has official responsibility for any matter that comes before the school committee. This is still the case even if he has recused himself from participating in the matter in his official capacity.

*Example:* A member who sits as an alternate on the conservation commission is a special municipal employee. Under town by-laws, he only has official responsibility for matters assigned to him. He may represent a resident who wants to file an application with the conservation commission as long as the matter is not assigned to him and he will not participate in it.

**(c) Inside track. Being paid by your city or town, directly or indirectly, under some second arrangement in addition to your job is prohibited, unless an exemption applies. (See Section 20)**

A municipal employee generally may not have a financial interest in a municipal contract, including a second municipal job. A municipal employee is also generally prohibited from having an indirect financial interest in a contract that the city or town has with someone else. This provision is intended to prevent municipal employees from having an “inside track” to further financial opportunities.

*Example of violation:* Legal counsel to the town housing authority becomes the acting executive director of the authority, and is paid in both positions.

*Example of violation:* A selectman buys a surplus truck from the town DPW.

*Example of violation:* A full-time secretary for the board of health wants to have a second paid job working part-time for the town library. She will violate Section 20 unless she can meet the requirements of an exemption.

*Example of violation:* A city councilor wants to work for a non-profit that receives funding under a contract with her city. Unless she can satisfy the requirements of an exemption under Section 20, she cannot take the job.

There are numerous exemptions. A municipal employee may hold multiple unpaid or elected positions. Some exemptions apply only to special municipal employees. Specific exemptions may cover serving as an unpaid volunteer in a second town position, housing-related benefits, public safety positions, certain elected positions, small towns, and other specific situations. Please call the Ethics Commission’s Legal Division for advice about a specific situation.

#### IV. After you leave municipal employment. (See Section 18)

**(a) Forever ban. After you leave your municipal job, you may never work for anyone other than the municipality on a matter that you worked on as a municipal employee.**

If you participated in a matter as a municipal employee, you cannot ever be paid to work on that same matter for anyone other than the municipality, nor may you act for someone else, whether paid or not. The purpose of this restriction is to bar former employees from selling to private interests their familiarity with the facts of particular matters that are of continuing concern to their former municipal employer. The restriction does not prohibit former municipal employees from using the expertise acquired in government service in their subsequent private activities.

*Example of violation:* A former school department employee works for a contractor under a contract that she helped to draft and oversee for the school department.

**(b) One year cooling-off period. For one year after you leave your municipal job you may not participate in any matter over which you had official responsibility during your last two years of public service.**

Former municipal employees are barred for one year after they leave municipal employment from personally appearing before any agency of the municipality in connection with matters that were under their authority in their prior municipal positions during the two years before they left.

*Example:* An assistant town manager negotiates a three-year contract with a company. The town manager who supervised the assistant, and had official responsibility for the contract but did not participate in negotiating it, leaves her job to work for the company to which the contract was awarded. The former manager may not call or write the town in connection with the company's work on the contract for one year after leaving the town.

A former municipal employee who participated as such in general legislation on expanded gaming and related matters may not become an officer or employee of, or acquire a financial interest in, an applicant for a gaming license, or a gaming licensee, for one year after his public employment ceases.

**(c) Partners. Your partners will be subject to restrictions while you serve as a municipal employee and after your municipal service ends.**

Partners of municipal employees and former municipal employees are also subject to restrictions under the conflict of interest law. If a municipal employee participated in a matter, or if he has official responsibility for a matter, then his partner may not act on behalf of anyone other than the municipality or provide services as an attorney to anyone but the city or town in relation to the matter.

*Example:* While serving on a city’s historic district commission, an architect reviewed an application to get landmark status for a building. His partners at his architecture firm may not prepare and sign plans for the owner of the building or otherwise act on the owner’s behalf in relation to the application for landmark status. In addition, because the architect has official responsibility as a commissioner for every matter that comes before the commission, his partners may not communicate with the commission or otherwise act on behalf of any client on any matter that comes before the commission during the time that the architect serves on the commission.

*Example:* A former town counsel joins a law firm as a partner. Because she litigated a lawsuit for the town, her new partners cannot represent any private clients in the lawsuit for one year after her job with the town ended.

\* \* \* \* \*

This summary is not intended to be legal advice and, because it is a summary, it does not mention every provision of the conflict law that may apply in a particular situation. Our website, <http://www.mass.gov/ethics>, contains further information about how the law applies in many situations. You can also contact the Commission’s Legal Division via our website, by telephone, or by letter. Our contact information is at the top of this document.

Version 7: Revised November 14, 2016.

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, an employee at \_\_\_\_\_,  
*(first and last name)* *(name of municipal dept.)*  
hereby acknowledge that I received a copy of the summary of the conflict of interest law  
for municipal employees, revised November 14, 2016, on \_\_\_\_\_.  
*(date)*

*Municipal employees should complete the acknowledgment of receipt and return it to the individual who provided them with a copy of the summary. Alternatively, municipal employees may send an email acknowledging receipt of the summary to the individual who provided them with a copy of it.*

**Brideau, Ellen**

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**From:** Klein, Beth  
**Sent:** Friday, October 06, 2017 1:04 PM  
**To:** Department Manager; Abdella, Tom; Ahearne, Oliver; Aida Gennis; Anette Lewis; Anne Harris; Asa Foster; Berry, Dennis; Betsy Soule; Bill Steinberg; Bill Sterling; Brown, Chris; Brud Wright; Carol Martin; Catherine Radmer; Christopher Cullen ; cmsalerno (cmsalerno@comcast.net); Daniel C Hill; Dave Bernstein; Dave Watkins; David C. D'Orlando; Douglas J. Leard (dougleard@realtour4u.com); ebpedersen@comcast.net; Elise Scola; ellen greico; Ellen Tohn (etohn@comcast.net); Knight, Fred; Gretchen Schuler; James Riley; Jeffrey Baron; Joan Bradford; John Schuler; Mishara, Jon; Jonathan Saxton; Judith H. Ide; Jurist, Louis; Kara Brewton; Karlson, Cherry; Katherine Gardner-Westcott; Kevin Goodwin; Larry Kiernan; Anderson, Lea; Levine, Doug; Linda Segal; Lowery, Mike; Mary Antes (mantes2@verizon.net); Miranda Jones (mjones@ogglaw.com); Mishara, Jon; Patricia Reinholdt; Baston, Woody; Rachel Bratt; Rebecca MacGregor (becca.macgregor@gmail.com); Turner, Richard; Rita Soulia; Sally Cartwright; sarah.m.greenaway@gmail.com; Sherre Greenbaum (sherregreenbaum@gmail.com); Susan Green; Susan Koffman; Susan Rufo (srufo@comcast.net); Susan Wagner; susan weinstein; suzanne woodruff; Thomas Klem; Toni Moore; Wegerbauer, Mike; zachariah ventress; Zoning Board of Appeal  
**Cc:** Townclerk; David Porter; Marobella, Diane  
**Subject:** FW: Revisions to the Open Meeting Law as of 10/2017  
**Attachments:** 2017 Guide only.pdf; Certificate of Receipt of Open Meeting Law Materials-2017.pdf; Explanation of Changes.pdf; New OML Regulations (Clean version).pdf; Public Body Checklist - Notice-2017.pdf; Public Body Checklist - Minutes-2017.pdf

The AGO has recently approved revisions to the Open Meeting Law which goes into effect October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017. I have attached copies of the new Open Meeting Guide, regulations and an explanation of the changes put out by the Attorney General's Office. Please review carefully and forward this to your board and committee members. Town counsel is reviewing the changes and will provide further guidance. If you have questions please feel free to contact this office. Thank you,

*Beth R. Klein*

Beth R. Klein, CMC  
Town Clerk  
Town of Wayland  
41 Cochituate Road,  
Wayland, MA 01778  
508-358-3631  
[bklein@wayland.ma.us](mailto:bklein@wayland.ma.us)  
[www.wayland.ma.us/pages/waylandma\\_clerk/index](http://www.wayland.ma.us/pages/waylandma_clerk/index)

Meeting Notices must be received in the Town Clerks office 30 minutes before the close of business to insure that they will be posted that day. Please email notices to [townclerk@wayland.ma.us](mailto:townclerk@wayland.ma.us).

**CERTIFICATE OF RECEIPT OF OPEN MEETING LAW MATERIALS**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, who qualified as a member of the  
(Name)  
\_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_, certify pursuant  
(Public Body) (Date)

to G.L. c. 30A, § 20(h) and 940 CMR 29.04, that I have received and reviewed copies of the following Open Meeting Law materials:

- 1) the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25;
- 2) the Attorney General’s Regulations, 940 CMR 29.00–29.11;
- 3) the Attorney General’s Open Meeting Law Guide, explaining the Open Meeting Law and its application; and
- 4) if applicable, a copy of each Open Meeting Law determination issued by the Attorney General within the last five (5) years to the public body of which I am a member and in which the Attorney General found a violation of the Open Meeting Law.

I have read and understand the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and the consequences of violating it. I further understand that the materials I have received may be revised or updated from time to time, and that I have a continuing obligation to implement any changes to the Open Meeting Law during my term of office.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Public Body)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

*Pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, § 20(h), an executed copy of this certificate shall be retained, according to the relevant records retention schedule, by the appointing authority, city or town clerk, or the executive director or other appropriate administrator of a state or regional body, or their designee.*

Explanations for the Attorney General's Revisions to  
the Open Meeting Law Regulations, 940 CMR 29.00-29.11

September 25, 2017

The Attorney General has promulgated revisions to the Open Meeting Law regulations in an effort to help members of public bodies and the public better understand the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and to update the regulations to conform with guidance issued by the Attorney General. These revisions become effective on **October 6, 2017**. Below is a summary of the material revisions to each section of the regulations and an explanation of why the revisions were made.

29.01: Purpose, Scope and Other General Provisions

There are no revisions to this section.

29.02: Definitions

A revision to this section removes the definition of the Open Meeting Law Advisory Commission because the Commission is not otherwise referenced in these regulations, making this definition unnecessary. This section also adds definitions for regional and county public bodies to clarify their jurisdiction. State and local public body jurisdictions are generally understood and thus are not defined here.

In the definition of intentional violation, a revision removes a phrase that offers a defense to the imposition of an intentional violation where a public body reasonably relied on the advice of counsel. Language describing a defense to the imposition of a fine where a public body reasonably relied on the advice of counsel now appears in section 29.07, the section describing penalties.

29.03: Notice Posting Requirements

A significant revision in this section removes the various alternative notice posting options for local public bodies and offer a single alternative to the bulletin board: a website. Few, if any, municipalities have adopted alternatives other than the municipal website. Another significant revision clarifies that the chief executive officer of a municipality must make the decision to adopt an alternative notice posting method for the municipality. The Attorney General has received numerous requests from municipalities seeking guidance as to who has the authority to adopt alternative notice posting methods. This language clarifies that authority.

The Attorney General often receives questions about the effect on meeting notices when a website becomes unavailable for public bodies that have adopted a website for posting notices. An addition here offers a balanced approach to give a public body or a municipality a short window of time to restore website access before requiring public bodies to cancel their meetings and post new notices.



Additional language requires the date and time that notices are amended to be recorded on or with the notice, which conforms with guidance provided in the Attorney General's Open Meeting Law determinations.

#### 29.04: Certification

Most of the revisions here reorganize the section to make it easier to follow. A significant revision requires that new public body members receive a copy of each determination by the Attorney General that the public body violated the Open Meeting Law, over the prior five years. This requirement will ensure that new public body members are aware of their public body's history of compliance with the law and any orders that the Attorney General may have issued, thus reducing the risk of repeat violations and intentional violations. Additional language offers guidance in response to questions the Attorney General regularly receives regarding certification.

#### 29.05: Complaints

A significant revision creates an option for public bodies to request mediation with a complainant who has filed five or more complaints within the prior 12 months. This option is for public bodies that respond to frequent complaints from the same complainants and may assist in resolving ongoing conflicts. If the public body requests mediation and the complainant fails to participate, then the Attorney General may decline to review the complaint.

Another revision clarifies that public bodies must meet to review Open Meeting Law complaints. This requirement has been made clear in the Attorney General's determinations. Also, in this section is a clarification that complainants must file complaints with the Attorney General within 90 days of an alleged violation or reasonable discovery of the alleged violation. Currently, the regulations do not account for reasonable discovery. Finally, the changes remove language and subsections that are not relevant, or are rarely, if ever, invoked.

#### 29.06: Investigation

A revision in this section clarifies that, while the Attorney General will generally not disclose information provided by the subject of a complaint in the course of an investigation, the Attorney General may reveal such information in a written determination where necessary to resolve the complaint. The Attorney General will continue to maintain the confidentiality of executive session minutes and documents where the public body has not yet publicly released the executive session minutes.

#### 29.07: Resolution

The most significant revision in this section removes the requirement that the Attorney General resolve complaints after a hearing before issuing orders of nullification and reinstatement of an employee. This means that the Attorney General may order nullification of an action taken by a public body in violation of the Open Meeting Law, or order the reinstatement of an employee, without the necessity of a hearing before an administrative law judge. This allows the Attorney

General to issue such orders sooner, avoiding harm to those who rely on a public body's action that would otherwise be nullified many months later. A public body still has the right to appeal the Attorney General's order within 21 days.

Another revision clarifies that, while the Attorney General may fine a public body for an intentional violation of the Open Meeting Law, a fine will not be imposed where the public body acted in good faith compliance with advice of counsel. This is a requirement in the Open Meeting Law itself.

A significant revision to this section requires public bodies that receive an order from the Attorney General to certify in writing to the Attorney General its compliance with the order within 30 days. Typical orders requiring written certification include approval and release of meeting minutes and attendance at a training. No such certification is required for orders of immediate and future compliance. This requirement will help the Attorney General ensure that public bodies comply with her orders. This section also clarifies that the Attorney General does not resolve complaints by telephone.

#### 29.08: Advisory Opinions

The Attorney General has never invoked this section, and by policy, does not issue Open Meeting Law advisory opinions. Rather, the Attorney General provides written guidance on common concerns available on the Frequently Asked Questions pages at the Attorney General's website. The update to this section reflects that practice.

#### 29.09: Other Enforcement Actions

There are no revisions to this section.

#### 29.10: Remote Participation

The most significant revision to this section replaces the five permissible reasons for remote participation with the sole requirement that, to participate in a meeting remotely, physical attendance at the meeting be unreasonably difficult. This single standard should help public body members and the public understand when it is appropriate to participate remotely. The five permissible reasons currently provided in the regulations add another level of administration to remote participation procedures. Another revision reflects a recently adopted amendment to the Open Meeting Law that applies to local commissions on disability.

#### 29.11: Meeting Minutes

This revision adds a new section describing public bodies' obligations to approve both open and executive session meeting minutes. It also provides guidance by addressing the meaning of "timely manner" for the approval of minutes. The Open Meeting Law requires public bodies to approve meeting minutes in a timely manner. Public bodies that approve meeting minutes within the next three meetings, or 30 days, whichever occurs latest, will have approved minutes in a timely manner. While this timeframe is not a rigid requirement, as a public body may show

good cause for further delay, it should help encourage public bodies to develop a schedule for prompt creation and approval of meeting minutes.

# Public Body Checklist for Posting a Meeting Notice

Issued by the Attorney General's Division of Open Government – September 25, 2017

## Notice Contents

- The notice contains the date, time, and location of the meeting. G.L. c. 30A, § 20(b).
- If the meeting is a joint meeting of several public bodies, the names of all bodies meeting are listed at the top of the notice.
- The notice contains all of the topics that the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting. The topics are sufficiently specific to reasonably advise the public of the issues to be discussed at the meeting, including executive session topics. G.L. c. 30A § 20(b); 940 CMR 29.03(1)(b).
- The notice is printed in a legible, easily understandable format. G.L. c. 30A, § 20(b).
- The date and time that the notice is posted is conspicuously recorded on or with the notice. 940 CMR 29.03(1)(d). If the notice is amended within 48 hours of a meeting, not including Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays, then the date and time that the meeting notice is amended must also be conspicuously recorded on or with the notice. 940 CMR 29.03(1)(d).

## Notice Publication

- The notice is published at least 48 hours before the meeting, not including Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays. G.L. c. 30A, § 20(b).
- The notice is posted with the proper authority:
  - Local public bodies – Filed with the municipal clerk, who must post it in a location conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in or on the municipal building where the clerk's office is located, or to the municipal website if adopted by the municipality as the official method of posting notices. G.L. c. 30A, § 20(c); 940 CMR 29.03.
  - State public bodies – Posted to a website, and a copy sent to the Secretary of State's Regulations Division. G.L. c. 30A, §20(c).
  - Regional public bodies – Posted in every municipality within the region, unless the public body has adopted an alternative notice posting method. G.L. c. 30A, § 20(c); 940 CMR 29.03.
  - County public bodies – Filed with the office of the county commissioners and a copy of the notice is publicly posted in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in such place or places as the county commissioners shall designate for the purpose, unless the county has adopted its website as the official method for posting notices. G.L. c. 30A, § 20(c); 940 CMR 29.03.

**Note that this checklist is intended as an educational guide, and does not constitute proof of compliance with the Open Meeting Law. These checklists are updated periodically, so please check that you are using the most current version. For questions, please contact the Attorney General's Division of Open Government at 617-963-2540 or via email at [openmeeting@state.ma.us](mailto:openmeeting@state.ma.us). For more information on the Open Meeting Law, please visit [www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting](http://www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting).**



# Public Body Checklist for Creating and Approving Meeting Minutes

Issued by the Attorney General's Division of Open Government – September 25, 2017

- Minutes must accurately set forth the date, time, place of the meeting, and a list of the members present or absent. G.L. c. 30A, § 22(a).
- Minutes must include an accurate summary of the discussion of each subject. See G.L. c. 30A, § 22(a). The summary does not need to be a transcript, but should provide enough detail so that a member of the public who did not attend the meeting could read the minutes and understand what occurred and how the public body arrived at its decisions.
- The minutes must include a record of all the decisions made and the actions taken at each meeting, including a record of all votes. G.L. c. 30A, § 22(a).
- The minutes must include a list of all of the documents and other exhibits used by the public body during the meeting. G.L. c. 30A, § 22(a). Documents and exhibits used at the meeting are part of the official record of the session, but do not need to be physically attached to the minutes. See G.L. c. 30A, §§ 22(d), (e).
- If one or more public body members participated remotely in the meeting, the minutes must include the name(s) of the individual(s) participating remotely. 940 CMR 29.10(7)(b).
- If one or more public body members participated remotely in the meeting, the minutes must record all votes as roll call votes. 940 CMR 29.10(7)(c).
- Executive session minutes must record all votes as roll call votes. G.L. c. 30A, § 22(b).
- The minutes must be approved in a timely manner. G.L. c. 30A, § 22(c). A “timely manner” will generally be considered to be within the next **three** public body meetings or within **30 days**, whichever is later, unless the public body can show good cause for further delay. 940 CMR 29.11(2).

**Note that this checklist is intended as an educational guide, and does not constitute proof of compliance with the Open Meeting Law. Checklists are updated periodically, so please confirm that you are using the most current version. For questions, please contact the Attorney General's Division of Open Government at 617-963-2540 or via email at [openmeeting@state.ma.us](mailto:openmeeting@state.ma.us). For more information on the Open Meeting Law, please visit [www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting](http://www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting).**

# Open Meeting Law Guide



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

**OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
**MAURA HEALEY**

**OCTOBER 6, 2017**

Dear Massachusetts Residents:

One of the most important functions of the Attorney General's Office is to promote openness and transparency in government. Every resident of Massachusetts should be able to access and understand the reasoning behind the government policy decisions that affect our lives. My office is working to achieve that goal through fair and consistent enforcement of the Open Meeting Law, along with robust educational outreach about the law's requirements.

The Open Meeting Law requires that most meetings of public bodies be held in public, and it establishes rules that public bodies must follow in the creation and maintenance of records relating to those meetings. Our office is dedicated to providing educational materials, outreach and training sessions to ensure that members of public bodies and citizens understand their rights and responsibilities under the law.

Whether you are a town clerk or town manager, a member of a public body, or a concerned citizen, I want to thank you for taking the time to understand the Open Meeting Law. If you would like additional guidance on the law, I encourage you to contact my Division of Open Government at (617) 963-2540 or visit our website at [www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting](http://www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting) for more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ma Healey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Maura Healey  
Massachusetts Attorney General

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# *Attorney General's Open Meeting Law Guide*

## **Overview**

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### **Purpose of the Law**

The purpose of the Open Meeting Law is to ensure transparency in the deliberations on which public policy is based. Because the democratic process depends on the public having knowledge about the considerations underlying governmental action, the Open Meeting Law requires, with some exceptions, that meetings of public bodies be open to the public. It also seeks to balance the public's interest in witnessing the deliberations of public officials with the government's need to manage its operations efficiently.

### **Attorney General's Authority**

The Open Meeting Law was revised as part of the 2009 Ethics Reform Bill, and now centralizes responsibility for statewide enforcement of the law in the Attorney General's Office. G.L. c. 30A, § 19(a). To help public bodies understand and comply with the law, the Attorney General has created the Division of Open Government. The Division of Open Government provides training, responds to inquiries, investigates complaints, and when necessary, makes findings and orders remedial action to address violations of the law. The purpose of this Guide is to inform elected and appointed members of public bodies, as well as the interested public, of the basic requirements of the law.

### **Certification**

Within two weeks of a member's election or appointment or the taking of the oath of office, whichever occurs later, all members of public bodies must complete the attached Certificate of Receipt of Open Meeting Law Materials certifying that they have received these materials, and that they understand the requirements of the Open Meeting Law and the consequences of violating it. The certification must be retained where the public body maintains its official records. All public body members should familiarize themselves with the Open Meeting Law, the Attorney General's regulations, this Guide, and Open Meeting Law determinations issued to the member's public body within the last five years in which the Attorney General found a violation of the law.

In the event a Certificate has not yet been completed by a presently serving member of a public body, the member should complete and submit the Certificate at the earliest opportunity to be considered in compliance with the law. A public body

member must sign a new Certificate upon reelection or reappointment to the public body but need not sign a Certificate when joining a subcommittee.

#### Open Meeting Law Website

This Guide is intended to be a clear and concise explanation of the Open Meeting Law's requirements. The complete law, as well as the Attorney General's regulations, training materials, and determinations and declinations as to complaints can be found on the Attorney General's Open Meeting website, [www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting](http://www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting). Members of public bodies, other local and state government officials, and the public are encouraged to visit the website regularly for updates on the law and the Attorney General's interpretations of it.

## **Meetings of Public Bodies**

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What meetings are covered by the Open Meeting Law?

With certain exceptions, all meetings of a public body must be open to the public. A meeting is generally defined as "a deliberation by a public body with respect to any matter within the body's jurisdiction." As explained more fully below, a deliberation is a communication between or among members of a public body.

These four questions will help determine whether a communication constitutes a meeting subject to the law:

- 1) is the communication between or among members of a **public body**;
- 2) if so, does the communication constitute a **deliberation**;
- 3) does the communication involve a matter within the body's **jurisdiction**; and
- 4) if so, does the communication fall within an **exception** listed in the law?

What constitutes a public body?

While there is no comprehensive list of public bodies, any multi-member board, commission, committee or subcommittee within the executive or legislative branches<sup>1</sup> of state government, or within any county, district, city, region or town, if established to serve a public purpose, is subject to the law. The law includes any multi-member body created to advise or make recommendations to a public body, and also includes the governing board of any local housing or redevelopment authority, and the governing board or body of any authority established by the Legislature to serve a public purpose. The law excludes the Legislature and its committees, bodies of the judicial branch, and

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<sup>1</sup>Although the Legislature itself is not a public body subject to the Open Meeting Law, certain legislative commissions must follow the Law's requirements.

bodies appointed by a constitutional officer solely for the purpose of advising a constitutional officer.

Boards of selectmen and school committees (including those of charter schools) are certainly subject to the Open Meeting Law, as are subcommittees of public bodies, regardless of whether their role is decision-making or advisory. Individual government officials, such as a town manager or police chief, and members of their staff are not subject to the law, and so they may meet with one another to discuss public business without needing to comply with Open Meeting Law requirements. This exception for individual officials to the general Open Meeting Law does not apply where such officials are serving as members of a multiple-member public body that is subject to the law.

Bodies appointed by a public official solely for the purpose of advising the official on a decision that individual could make alone are not public bodies subject to the Open Meeting Law. For example, a school superintendent appoints a five-member advisory body to assist her in nominating candidates for school principal, a task the superintendent could perform herself. That advisory body would not be subject to the Open Meeting Law.<sup>2</sup>

#### What constitutes a deliberation?

The Open Meeting Law defines deliberation as “an oral or written communication through any medium, including electronic mail, between or among a quorum of a public body on any public business within its jurisdiction.” Distribution of a meeting agenda, scheduling or procedural information, or reports or documents that may be discussed at a meeting is often helpful to public body members when preparing for upcoming meetings. These types of communications generally will not constitute deliberation, provided that, when these materials are distributed, no member of the public body expresses an opinion on matters within the body’s jurisdiction. Additionally, certain communications that may otherwise be considered deliberation are specifically exempt by statute from the definition of deliberation (for example, discussion of the recess and continuance of a Town Meeting pursuant to G.L. c. 39, § 10A(a) is not deliberation).

To be a deliberation, the communication must involve a quorum of the public body. A quorum is usually a simple majority of the members of a public body. Thus, a communication among less than a quorum of the members of a public body will not be a deliberation, unless there are multiple communications among the members of the public body that together constitute communication among a quorum of members. Courts have held that the Open Meeting Law applies when members of a public body communicate in a serial manner in order to evade the application of the law.

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<sup>2</sup> See Connelly v. School Committee of Hanover, 409 Mass. 232 (1991).

Note that the expression of an opinion on matters within the body's jurisdiction to a quorum of a public body is a deliberation, even if no other public body member responds. For example, if a member of a public body sends an email to a quorum of a public body expressing her opinion on a matter that could come before that body, this communication violates the law even if none of the recipients responds.

What matters are within the jurisdiction of the public body?

The Open Meeting Law applies only to the discussion of any "matter within the body's jurisdiction." The law does not specifically define "jurisdiction." As a general rule, any matter of public business on which a quorum of the public body may make a decision or recommendation is considered a matter within the jurisdiction of the public body. Certain discussions regarding procedural or administrative matters may also relate to public business within a body's jurisdiction, such as where the discussion involves the organization and leadership of the public body, committee assignments, or rules or bylaws for the body. Statements made for political purposes, such as where a public body's members characterize their own past achievements, generally are not considered communications on public business within the jurisdiction of the public body.

What are the exceptions to the definition of a meeting?

There are five exceptions to the definition of a meeting under the Open Meeting Law.

1. Members of a public body may conduct an on-site inspection of a project or program; however, they may not deliberate at such gatherings;
2. Members of a public body may attend a conference, training program or event; however, they may not deliberate at such gatherings;
3. Members of a public body may attend a meeting of another public body provided that they communicate only by open participation; however, they may not deliberate at such gatherings;
4. Meetings of quasi-judicial boards or commissions held solely to make decisions in an adjudicatory proceeding are not subject to the Open Meeting Law; and
5. Town Meetings, which are subject to other legal requirements, are not governed by the Open Meeting Law. See, e.g. G.L. c. 39, §§ 9, 10 (establishing procedures for Town Meeting).

The Attorney General interprets the exemption for "quasi-judicial boards or commissions" to apply only to certain state "quasi-judicial" bodies and a very limited number of public bodies at other levels of government whose proceedings are specifically defined as "agencies" for purposes of G.L. c. 30A.



We have received several inquiries about the exception for Town Meeting and whether it applies to meetings outside of a Town Meeting session by Town Meeting members or Town Meeting committees or to deliberation by members of a public body – such as a board of selectmen – during a session of Town Meeting. The Attorney General interprets this exemption to mean that the Open Meeting Law does not reach any aspect of Town Meeting. Therefore, the Attorney General will not investigate complaints alleging violations in these situations. Note, however, that this is a matter of interpretation and future Attorneys General may choose to apply the law in such situations.

## Notice

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### What are the requirements for posting notice of meetings?

Except in cases of emergency, a public body must provide the public with notice of its meeting 48 hours in advance, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays. Notice of emergency meetings must be posted as soon as reasonably possible prior to the meeting. Also note that other laws, such as those governing procedures for public hearings, may require additional notice.

### What are the requirements for filing and posting meeting notices for local public bodies?

For local public bodies, meeting notices must be filed with the municipal clerk with enough time to permit posting of the notice at least 48 hours in advance of the public meeting. Notices may be posted on a bulletin board, in a loose-leaf binder, or on an electronic display (e.g. television, computer monitor, or an electronic bulletin board), provided that the notice is conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in, on, or near the municipal building in which the clerk's office is located. In the event that meeting notices posted in the municipal building are not visible to the public at all hours, then the municipality must either post notices on the outside of the building or adopt the municipal website as the official method of notice posting.

Prior to utilizing the municipal website, the Chief Executive Officer of the municipality must authorize or vote to adopt such website as the official method of posting notice. The clerk of the municipality must inform the Division of Open Government of its notice posting method and must inform the Division of any future changes to that posting method. Public bodies must consistently use the most current notice posting method on file with the Division. A description of the website, including directions on how to locate notices on the website, must also be posted on or adjacent to the main and handicapped accessible entrances to the building where the clerk's office is located. Note that meeting notices must still be available in or around the

clerk's office so that members of the public may view the notices during normal business hours.

What are the requirements for posting notices for regional, district, county and state public bodies?

For regional or district public bodies and regional school districts, meeting notices must be filed and posted in the same manner required of local public bodies in each of the communities within the region or district. As an alternative method of notice, a regional or district public body may post a meeting notice on the regional or district public body's website. The regional school district committee must file and post notice of the website address, as well as directions on how to locate notices on the website, in each city and town within the region or district. A copy of the notice must be filed and kept by the chair of the public body or the chair's designee.

County public bodies must file meeting notices in the office of the county commissioners and post notice of the meeting in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours at a place or places designated by the county commissioners for notice postings. As an alternative method of notice, a county public body may post notice of meetings on the county public body's website. The county public body must file and post notice of the website address, as well as directions on how to locate notices on the website, in the office of the county commissioners. A copy of the notice shall be filed and kept by the chair of the county public body or the chair's designee.

State public bodies must post meeting notices on the website of the public body or its parent agency. The chair of a state public body must notify the Attorney General in writing of the specific webpage location where notices will be posted and of any subsequent changes to that posting location. A copy of each meeting notice must also be sent to the Secretary of State's Regulations Division and should be forwarded to the Executive Office of Administration and Finance, which maintains a listing of state public body meetings.

Where a public body adopts a website as the official method of posting notices, it must make every effort to ensure that the website is accessible at all hours. If a website becomes inaccessible within 48 hours of a meeting, not including Saturdays, Sundays or legal holidays, the website must be restored within six business hours of the discovery. If the website is not restored within six business hours, the public body must re-post notice of its meeting to another date and time, in accordance with the requirements of the Open Meeting Law.

A note about accessibility

Public bodies are subject to all applicable state and federal laws that govern accessibility for persons with disabilities. These laws include the Americans with

Disabilities Act, the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and state constitutional provisions. For instance, public bodies that adopt website posting as an alternative method of notice must ensure that the website is readily accessible to people with disabilities, including individuals who use screen readers. All open meetings of public bodies must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Meeting locations must be accessible by wheelchair, without the need for special assistance. Also sign language interpreters for deaf or hearing-impaired persons must be provided, subject to reasonable advance notice.<sup>3</sup> The Attorney General’s Disability Rights Project is available to answer questions about accessibility and may be reached at (617) 963-2939.

### What information must meeting notices contain?

Meeting notices must be posted in a legible, easily understandable format; contain the date, time, and place of the meeting; and list all topics that the chair reasonably anticipates, 48 hours in advance, will be discussed at the meeting. The list of topics must be sufficiently specific to reasonably inform the public of the issues to be discussed at the meeting. Where there are no anticipated topics for discussion in open session other than the procedural requirements for convening an executive session, the public body should list “open session” as a topic, in addition to the executive session, so the public is aware that it has the opportunity to attend and learn the basis for the executive session.

Meeting notices must also indicate the date and time that the notice was posted, either on the notice itself or in a document or website accompanying the notice. If a notice is revised, the revised notice must also conspicuously record both the date and time the original notice was posted as well as the date and time the last revision was posted. Recording the date and time enables the public to observe that public bodies are complying with the Open Meeting Law’s notice requirements without requiring constant vigilance. Additionally, in the event of a complaint, it provides the Attorney General with evidence of compliance with those requirements.

If a discussion topic is proposed after a meeting notice is posted, and it was not reasonably anticipated by the chair more than 48 hours before the meeting, the public body should update its posting to provide the public with as much notice as possible of what subjects will be discussed during the meeting. Although a public body may consider a topic that was not listed in the meeting notice if it was not anticipated, the Attorney General strongly encourages public bodies to postpone discussion and action on topics that are controversial or may be of particular interest to the public if the topic was not listed in the meeting notice.

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<sup>3</sup> The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will assist with arrangements for a sign language interpreter. The Commission may be reached at 617-740-1600 VOICE and 617-740-1700 TTY.



## Executive Session

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When can a public body meet in executive session?

While all meetings of public bodies must be open to the public, certain topics may be discussed in executive, or closed, session. Before going into an executive session, the chair of the public body must first:

- Convene in open session;
- State the reason for the executive session, stating all subjects that may be revealed without compromising the purpose for which the executive session was called;
- State whether the public body will reconvene in open session at the end of the executive session; and
- Take a roll call vote of the body to enter executive session.

Where a public body member is participating in an executive session remotely, the member must state at the start of the executive session that no other person is present or able to hear the discussion at the remote location. The public body may authorize, by a simple majority vote, the presence and participation of other individuals at the remote participant's location.

While in executive session, the public body must keep accurate records, all votes taken must be recorded by roll call, and the public body may only discuss matters for which the executive session was called.

### The Ten Purposes for Executive Session

The law states ten specific purposes for which an executive session may be held, and emphasizes that these are the only reasons for which a public body may enter executive session.

The ten purposes for which a public body may vote to hold an executive session are:

- 1. To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual. The individual to be discussed in such executive session shall be notified in writing by the public body at least 48 hours prior to the proposed executive session; provided, however, that notification may be waived upon written agreement of the parties.**



This purpose is designed to protect the rights and reputation of individuals. Nevertheless, where a public body is discussing an employee evaluation, considering applicants for a position, or discussing the qualifications of any individual, these discussions should be held in open session to the extent that the discussion deals with issues other than the reputation, character, health, or any complaints or charges against the individual. An executive session called for this purpose triggers certain rights for the individual who is the subject of the discussion. The individual has the right to be present, though he or she may choose not to attend. The individual who is the subject of the discussion may also choose to have the discussion in an open meeting, and that choice takes precedence over the right of the public body to go into executive session.

While the imposition of disciplinary sanctions by a public body on an individual fits within this purpose, this purpose does not apply if, for example, the public body is deciding whether to lay off a large number of employees because of budgetary constraints.

**2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel;**

Generally, a public body must identify the specific non-union personnel or collective bargaining unit with which it is negotiating before entering into executive session under Purpose 2. A public body may withhold the identity of the non-union personnel or bargaining unit if publicly disclosing that information would compromise the purpose for which the executive session was called. While we generally defer to public bodies' assessment of whether the inclusion of such details would compromise the purpose for an executive session, a public body must be able to demonstrate a reasonable basis for that claim if challenged.

While a public body may agree on terms with individual non-union personnel in executive session, the final vote to execute such agreements must be taken by the public body in open session. In contrast, a public body may approve final terms and execute a collective bargaining agreement in executive session, but should promptly disclose the agreement in open session following its execution.

**Collective Bargaining Sessions:** These include not only the bargaining sessions, but also include grievance hearings that are required by a collective bargaining agreement.

**3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares;**

Generally, a public body must identify the collective bargaining unit with which it is negotiating or the litigation matter it is discussing before entering into executive session under Purpose 3. A public body may withhold the identity of the collective bargaining unit or name of the litigation matter if publicly disclosing that information would compromise the purpose for which the executive session was called. While we generally defer to public bodies' assessment of whether the inclusion of such details would compromise the purpose for an executive session, a public body must be able to demonstrate a reasonable basis for that claim if challenged.

**Collective Bargaining Strategy:** Discussions with respect to collective bargaining strategy include discussion of proposals for wage and benefit packages or working conditions for union employees. The public body, if challenged, has the burden of proving that an open meeting might have a detrimental effect on its bargaining position. The showing that must be made is that an open discussion may have a detrimental effect on the collective bargaining process; the body is not required to demonstrate a definite harm that would have arisen. At the time the executive session is proposed and voted on, the chair must state on the record that having the discussion in an open session may be detrimental to the public body's bargaining or litigating position.

**Litigation Strategy:** Discussions concerning strategy with respect to ongoing litigation obviously fit within this purpose but only if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body. Discussions relating to potential litigation are not covered by this exemption unless that litigation is clearly and imminently threatened or otherwise demonstrably likely. That a person is represented by counsel and supports a position adverse to the public body's does not by itself mean that litigation is imminently threatened or likely. Nor does the fact that a newspaper reports a party has threatened to sue necessarily mean imminent litigation.

**Note:** For the reasons discussed above, a public body's discussions with its counsel do not automatically fall under this or any other purpose for holding an executive session.

- 4. To discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto;**
- 5. To investigate charges of criminal misconduct or to consider the filing of criminal complaints;**

This purpose permits an executive session to investigate charges of criminal misconduct and to consider the filing of criminal complaints. Thus, it primarily involves discussions that would precede the formal criminal process in court. Purpose 1 is related, in that it permits an executive session to discuss certain complaints or charges, which may include criminal complaints or charges, but only those that have already been brought. However, Purpose 1 confers certain rights of participation on the individual involved, as well as the right for the individual to insist that the discussion occur in open session. Purpose 5 does not require that the same rights be given to the person who is the subject of a criminal complaint. To the limited extent that there is overlap between Purposes 1 and 5, a public body has discretion to choose which purpose to invoke when going into executive session.

**6. To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body;**

Generally, a public body must identify the specific piece of property it plans to discuss before entering into executive session under Purpose 6. A public body may withhold the identity of the property if publicly disclosing that information would compromise the purpose for which the executive session was called. While we generally defer to public bodies' assessment of whether the inclusion of such details would compromise the purpose for an executive session, a public body must be able to demonstrate a reasonable basis for that claim if challenged.

Under this purpose, as with the collective bargaining and litigation purpose, an executive session may be held only where an open meeting may have a detrimental impact on the body's negotiating position with a third party. At the time that the executive session is proposed and voted on, the chair must state on the record that having the discussion in an open session may be detrimental to the public body's negotiating position.

**7. To comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements;**

There may be provisions in state statutes or federal grants that require or specifically allow a public body to consider a particular issue in a closed session. Before entering executive session under this purpose, the public body must cite the specific law or federal grant-in-aid requirement that necessitates confidentiality. A public body may withhold that information only if publicly disclosing it would compromise the purpose for which the executive session was called. While we generally defer to public bodies' assessment of whether the

inclusion of such details would compromise the purpose for an executive session, a public body must be able to demonstrate a reasonable basis for that claim if challenged.

- 8. To consider or interview applicants for employment or appointment by a preliminary screening committee if the chair declares that an open meeting will have a detrimental effect in obtaining qualified applicants; provided, however, that this clause shall not apply to any meeting, including meetings of a preliminary screening committee, to consider and interview applicants who have passed a prior preliminary screening;**

This purpose permits a hiring subcommittee of a public body or a preliminary screening committee to conduct the initial screening process in executive session. This purpose does not apply to any stage in the hiring process after the screening committee or subcommittee votes to recommend candidates to its parent body. It may, however, include a review of résumés and multiple rounds of interviews by the screening committee aimed at narrowing the group of applicants down to finalists. At the time that the executive session is proposed and voted on, the chair must state on the record that having the discussion in an open session will be detrimental to the public body's ability to attract qualified applicants for the position. If the public body opts to convene a preliminary screening committee, the committee must contain less than a quorum of the members of the parent public body. The committee may also contain members who are not members of the parent public body.

Note that a public body is not required to create a preliminary screening committee to consider or interview applicants. However, if the body chooses to conduct the review of applicants itself, it may not do so in executive session.

- 9. To meet or confer with a mediator, as defined in section 23C of chapter 233, with respect to any litigation or decision on any public business within its jurisdiction involving another party, group or entity, provided that:**
  - (i) any decision to participate in mediation shall be made in an open session and the parties, issues involved and purpose of the mediation shall be disclosed; and
  - (ii) no action shall be taken by any public body with respect to those issues which are the subject of the mediation without deliberation and approval for such action at an open session.
- 10. To discuss trade secrets or confidential, competitively-sensitive or other proprietary information provided:**

- in the course of activities conducted by a governmental body as an energy supplier under a license granted by the department of public utilities pursuant to section 1F of chapter 164;
- in the course of activities conducted as a municipal aggregator under section 134 of said chapter 164; or
- in the course of activities conducted by a cooperative consisting of governmental entities organized pursuant to section 136 of said chapter 164;
- when such governmental body, municipal aggregator or cooperative determines that such disclosure will adversely affect its ability to conduct business in relation to other entities making, selling or distributing electric power and energy.

## Remote Participation

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### May a member of a public body participate remotely?

The Attorney General's Regulations, 940 CMR 29.10, permit remote participation in certain circumstances. However, the Attorney General strongly encourages members of public bodies to physically attend meetings whenever possible. Members of public bodies have a responsibility to ensure that remote participation in meetings is not used in a way that would defeat the purposes of the Open Meeting Law, namely promoting transparency with regard to deliberations and decisions on which public policy is based.

Note that the Attorney General's regulations enable members of public bodies to participate remotely if the practice has been properly adopted, but do not require that a public body permit members of the public to participate remotely. If a public body chooses to allow individuals who are not members of the public body to participate remotely in a meeting, it may do so without following the Open Meeting Law's remote participation procedures.

### How can the practice of remote participation be adopted?

Remote participation may be used during a meeting of a public body if it has first been adopted by the chief executive officer of the municipality for local public bodies, the county commissioners for county public bodies, or by a majority vote of the public body for retirement boards, district, regional and state public bodies. The chief executive officer may be the board of selectmen, the city council, or the mayor, depending on the municipality. See G.L. c. 4, § 7.

If the chief executive officer in a municipality authorizes remote participation, that authorization applies to all public bodies in the municipality. 940 CMR 29.10(2)(a). However, the chief executive officer determines the amount and source of payment for any costs associated with remote participation and may decide to fund the practice only

for certain public bodies. See 940 CMR 29.10(6)(e). In addition, the chief executive officer can authorize public bodies in that municipality to "opt out" of the practice altogether. See 940 CMR 29.10(8).

Note about Local Commissions on Disability: Local commissions on disability may decide by majority vote of the commissioners at a regular meeting to permit remote participation during a specific meeting or during all commission meetings. G.L. c. 30A, § 20(e). Adoption by the municipal adopting authority is not required.

What are the permissible reasons for remote participation?

Once remote participation is adopted, any member of a public body may participate remotely only if physical attendance would be unreasonably difficult.

What are the acceptable means of remote participation?

Acceptable means of remote participation include telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio or video conferencing, or any other technology that enables the remote participant and all persons present at the meeting location to be clearly audible to one another. Text messaging, instant messaging, email and web chat without audio are not acceptable methods of remote participation. Note that accommodations must be made for any public body member who requires TTY service, video relay service, or other form of adaptive telecommunications.

What are the minimum requirements for remote participation?

Any public body using remote participation during a meeting must ensure that the following minimum requirements are met:

1. A quorum of the body, including the chair or, in the chair's absence, the person chairing the meeting, must be physically present at the meeting location;
2. Members of a public body who participate remotely and all persons present at the meeting location must be clearly audible to each other; and
3. All votes taken during a meeting in which a member participates remotely must be by roll call vote.

What procedures must be followed if remote participation is used at a meeting?

At the start of any meeting during which a member of a public body will participate remotely, the chair must announce the name of any member who is participating remotely; such information must also be recorded in the meeting minutes. The chair's statement does not need to contain any detail about the reason for the member's remote participation.



Members of public bodies who participate remotely may vote and shall not be deemed absent for purposes of G.L. c. 39, § 23D. In addition, members who participate remotely may participate in executive sessions but must state at the start of any such session that no other person is present or able to hear the discussion at the remote location, unless the public body has approved the presence of that individual.

If technical difficulties arise as a result of utilizing remote participation, the chair (or, in the chair's absence, person chairing the meeting) may decide how to address the situation. Public bodies are encouraged, whenever possible, to suspend discussion while reasonable efforts are made to correct any problem that interferes with a remote participant's ability to hear or be heard clearly by all persons present at the meeting location. If a remote participant is disconnected from the meeting, the minutes must note that fact and the time at which the disconnection occurred.

## Public Participation

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### What public participation in meetings must be allowed?

Under the Open Meeting Law, the public is permitted to attend meetings of public bodies but is excluded from an executive session that is called for a valid purpose listed in the law. While the public is permitted to attend an open meeting, an individual may not address the public body without permission of the chair. An individual may not disrupt a meeting of a public body, and at the request of the chair, all members of the public shall be silent. If, after clear warning, a person continues to be disruptive, the chair may order the person to leave the meeting. If the person does not leave, the chair may authorize a constable or other officer to remove the person. Although public participation is entirely within the chair's discretion, the Attorney General encourages public bodies to allow as much public participation as time permits.

Any member of the public may make an audio or video recording of an open session of a public meeting. A member of the public who wishes to record a meeting must first notify the chair and must comply with reasonable requirements regarding audio or video equipment established by the chair so as not to interfere with the meeting. The chair is required to inform other attendees of any such recording at the beginning of the meeting. If someone arrives after the meeting has begun and wishes to record a meeting, that person should attempt to notify the chair prior to beginning recording, ideally in a manner that does not significantly disrupt the meeting in progress (such as passing a note for the chair to the board administrator or secretary). The chair should endeavor to acknowledge such attempts at notification and announce the fact of any recording to those in attendance.

## Minutes

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What records of public meetings must be kept?

Public bodies are required to create and maintain accurate minutes of all meetings, including executive sessions. The minutes, which must be created and approved in a timely manner, must include:

- the date, time and place of the meeting;
- the members present or absent;
- the decisions made and actions taken, including a record of all votes;
- a summary of the discussions on each subject;
- a list of all documents and exhibits used at the meeting; and
- the name of any member who participated in the meeting remotely.

While the minutes must include a summary of the discussions on each subject, a transcript is not required. No vote taken by a public body, either in an open or in an executive session, shall be by secret ballot. All votes taken in executive session must be by roll call and the results recorded in the minutes. While public bodies must identify in the minutes all documents and exhibits used at a meeting and must retain them in accordance with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's records retention schedule, these documents and exhibits needn't be attached to or physically stored with the minutes.

Minutes, and all documents and exhibits used, are public records and a part of the official record of the meeting. Records may be subject to disclosure under either the Open Meeting Law or Public Records Law. The State and Municipal Record Retention Schedules are available through the Secretary of the Commonwealth's website at: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcrmu/rmuidx.htm>.

### Open Session Meeting Records

The Open Meeting Law requires public bodies to create and approve minutes in a timely manner. A "timely manner" is considered to be within the next three public body meetings or 30 days from the date of the meeting, whichever is later, unless the public body can show good cause for further delay. The Attorney General encourages minutes to be approved at a public body's next meeting whenever possible. The law requires that existing minutes be made available to the public within ten days of a request, whether they have been approved or remain in draft form. Materials or other exhibits used by the public body in an open meeting must also be made available to the public within ten days of a request.

There are two exemptions to the open session records disclosure requirement: 1) materials (other than those that were created by members of the public body for the



purpose of the evaluation) used in a performance evaluation of an individual bearing on his professional competence, and 2) materials (other than any résumé submitted by an applicant, which is subject to disclosure) used in deliberations about employment or appointment of individuals, including applications and supporting materials. Documents created by members of the public body for the purpose of performing an evaluation are subject to disclosure. This applies to both individual evaluations and evaluation compilations, provided the documents were created by members of the public body for the purpose of the evaluation.

### Executive Session Meeting Records

Public bodies are not required to disclose the minutes, notes, or other materials used in an executive session if the disclosure of these records may defeat the lawful purposes of the executive session. Once disclosure would no longer defeat the purposes of the executive session, however, minutes and other records from that executive session must be disclosed unless they fall within an exemption to the Public Records Law, G.L. c. 4, § 7, cl. 26, or the attorney-client privilege applies. Public bodies are also required to periodically review their executive session minutes to determine whether continued non-disclosure is warranted. These determinations must be included in the minutes of the body's next meeting.

A public body must respond to a request to inspect or copy executive session minutes within ten days of the request. If the public body has determined, prior to the request, that the requested executive session minutes may be released, it must make those minutes available to the requestor at that time. If the body previously determined that executive session minutes should remain confidential because publication would defeat the lawful purposes of the executive session, it should respond by stating the reason the minutes continue to be withheld. And if, at the time of a request, the public body has not conducted a review of the minutes to determine whether continued nondisclosure is warranted, the body must perform such a review and release the minutes, if appropriate, no later than its next meeting or within 30 days, whichever occurs first. In such circumstances, the body should still respond to the request within ten days, notifying the requestor that it is conducting this review.

## Open Meeting Law Complaints

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### What is the Attorney General's role in enforcing the Open Meeting Law?

The Attorney General's Division of Open Government is responsible for enforcing the Open Meeting Law. The Attorney General has the authority to receive and investigate complaints, bring enforcement actions, issue advisory opinions, and promulgate regulations.

The Division of Open Government regularly seeks feedback from the public on ways in which it can better support public bodies to help them comply with the law's requirements. The Division of Open Government offers periodic online and in-person training on the Open Meeting Law and will respond to requests for guidance and information from public bodies and the public.

The Division of Open Government will take complaints from members of the public and will work with public bodies to resolve problems. While any member of the public may file a complaint with a public body alleging a violation of the Open Meeting Law, a public body need not, and the Division of Open Government will not, investigate anonymous complaints.

What is the Open Meeting Law complaint procedure?

*Step 1. Filing a Complaint with the Public Body*

Individuals who allege a violation of the Open Meeting Law must first file a complaint **with the public body** alleged to have violated the OML. The complaint must be filed within 30 days of the date of the violation, or the date the complainant could reasonably have known of the violation. The complaint must be filed on a Complaint Form available on the Attorney General's website, [www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting](http://www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting). When filing a complaint with a local public body, the complainant must also file a copy of the complaint with the municipal clerk.

*Step 2. The Public Body's Response*

Upon receipt, the chair of the public body should distribute copies of the complaint to the members of the public body for their review. The public body has 14 business days from the date of receipt to meet to review the complainant's allegations, take remedial action if appropriate, notify the complainant of the remedial action, and forward a copy of the complaint and description of the remedial action taken to the complainant. The public body must simultaneously notify the Attorney General that it has responded to the complainant and provide the Attorney General with a copy of the response and a description of any remedial action taken. While the public body may delegate responsibility for responding to the complaint to counsel or another individual, it must first meet to do so. A public body is not required to respond to unsigned complaints or complaints not made on the Attorney General's complaint form.

The public body may request additional information from the complainant within seven business days of receiving the complaint. The complainant then has ten business days to respond; the public body will then have an additional ten business days after receiving the complainant's response to review the complaint and take remedial action. The public body may also request an extension of time to respond to the



complaint. A request for an extension should be made within 14 business days of receipt of the complaint by the public body. The request for an extension should be made in writing to the Division of Open Government and should include a copy of the complaint and state the reason for the requested extension.

### *Step 3. Filing a Complaint with the Attorney General's Office*

A complaint is ripe for review by the Attorney General 30 days after the complaint is filed with the public body. This 30-day period is intended to provide a reasonable opportunity for the complainant and the public body to resolve the initial complaint. It is important to note that complaints are *not* automatically treated as filed for review by the Attorney General upon filing with the public body. A complainant who has filed a complaint with a public body and seeks further review by the Division of Open Government must file the complaint with the Attorney General after the 30-day local review period has elapsed but before 90 days have passed since the date of the violation or the date that the violation was reasonably discoverable.

When filing the complaint with the Attorney General, the complainant must include a copy of the original complaint and may include any other materials the complainant feels are relevant, including an explanation of why the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the public body. Note, however, that the Attorney General will not review allegations that were not raised in the initial complaint filed with the public body. Under most circumstances, complaints filed with the Attorney General, and any documents submitted with the complaint, will be considered a public record and will be made available to anyone upon request.

The Attorney General will review the complaint and any remedial action taken by the public body. The Attorney General may request additional information from both the complainant and the public body. The Attorney General will seek to resolve complaints in a reasonable period of time, generally within 90 days of the complaint becoming ripe for review by our office. The Attorney General may decline to investigate a complaint that is filed with our office more than 90 days after the date of the alleged violation.

### *May a public body request mediation to resolve a complaint?*

If a complainant files five complaints with the same public body or within the same municipality within 12 months, the public body may request mediation upon the fifth or subsequent complaint in order to resolve the complaint. The public body must request mediation prior to, or with, its response to the complaint, and will assume the expense of such mediation. If the parties cannot come to an agreement after mediation, the public body will have ten business days to respond to the complaint and its resolution will proceed in the normal course.

Mediation may occur in open session or in executive session under Purpose 9. In addition, a public body may designate a representative to participate on behalf of the public body. If mediation does not resolve the complaint to each party's satisfaction, the complainant may file the complaint with the Attorney General. The complaint must be filed within 30 days of the last joint meeting with the mediator.

The mediator will be chosen by the Attorney General. If the complainant declines to participate in mediation after a request by the public body, the Attorney General may decline to review a complaint thereafter filed with our office. A public body may always request mediation to resolve a complaint, but only mediation requested upon a fifth or subsequent complaint triggers the requirement that the complainant participate in the mediation before the Attorney General will review the complaint.

Any written agreement reached in mediation must be disclosed at the public body's next meeting following execution of the agreement and will become a public record.

When is a violation of the law considered "intentional"?

Upon finding a violation of the Open Meeting Law, the Attorney General may impose a civil penalty upon a public body of not more than \$1,000 for each intentional violation. G.L. c. 30A, § 23(c)(4). An "intentional violation" is an act or omission by a public body or public body member in knowing violation of the Open Meeting Law. G.L. c. 30A, § 18. In determining whether a violation was intentional, the Attorney General will consider, among other things, whether the public body or public body member 1) acted with specific intent to violate the law; 2) acted with deliberate ignorance of the law's requirements; or 3) had been previously informed by a court decision or advised by the Attorney General that the conduct at issue violated the Open Meeting Law. 940 CMR 29.02. If a public body or public body member made a good faith attempt at compliance with the law but was reasonably mistaken about its requirements, its conduct will not be considered an intentional violation of the Law. G.L. c. 30A, § 23(g); 940 CMR 29.02. A fine will not be imposed where a public body or public body member acted in good faith compliance with the advice of the public body's legal counsel. G.L. 30A, § 23(g); 940 CMR 29.07.

## **Will the Attorney General's Office provide training on the Open Meeting Law?**

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The Open Meeting Law directs the Attorney General to create educational materials and provide training to public bodies to foster awareness of and compliance with the Open Meeting Law. The Attorney General has established an Open Meeting

Law website, [www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting](http://www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting), on which government officials and members of public bodies can find the statute, regulations, FAQs, training materials, the Attorney General's determination letters resolving complaints, and other resources. The Attorney General offers periodic webinars and in-person regional training events for members of the public and public bodies, in addition to offering a free online training video.

## **Contacting the Attorney General**

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If you have any questions about the Open Meeting Law or anything contained in this guide, please contact the Attorney General's Division of Open Government. The Attorney General also welcomes any comments, feedback, or suggestions you may have about the Open Meeting Law or this guide.

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940 CMR: OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

940 CMR 29.00: OPEN MEETINGS

Section

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29.01: Purpose, Scope and Other General Provisions

(1) Purpose. The purpose of 940 CMR 29.00 is to interpret, enforce and effectuate the purposes of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25.

(2) Severability. If any provision of 940 CMR 29.00 or the application of such provision to any person, public body, or circumstances shall be held invalid, the validity of the remainder of 940 CMR 29.00 and the applicability of such provision to other persons, public bodies, or circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

(3) Mailing. All complaints, notices (except meeting notices), and other materials that must be sent to another party shall be sent by one of the following means: first class mail, email, hand delivery, or by any other means at least as expeditious as first class mail.

29.02: Definitions

As used in 940 CMR 29.00, the following terms shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

County Public Body means a public body created by county government with jurisdiction that comprises a single county.

District Public Body means a public body with jurisdiction that extends to two or more municipalities.

Emergency means a sudden, generally unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances demanding immediate action.

Intentional Violation means an act or omission by a public body or a member thereof, in knowing violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25. Evidence of an intentional violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25 shall include, but not be limited to, that the public body or public body member: (a) acted with specific intent to violate the law; (b) acted with deliberate ignorance of the law's requirements; or (c) was previously informed by receipt of a decision from a court of competent jurisdiction or advised by the Attorney General, pursuant to 940 CMR 29.07 or 940 CMR 29.08, that the conduct violates M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25. Where a public body or public body member has made a good faith attempt at compliance with the law, but was reasonably mistaken about its requirements, such conduct will not be considered an intentional violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25.

Person means all individuals and entities, including governmental officials and employees. Person does not include public bodies.

Post Notice means to place a written announcement of a meeting on a bulletin board, electronic display, website, or in a loose-leaf binder in a manner conspicuously visible to the public, including persons with disabilities, at all hours, in accordance with 940 CMR 29.03.

Public Body has the identical meaning as set forth in M.G.L. c. 30A, § 18, that is, a multiple-member board, commission, committee or subcommittee within the executive or legislative branch or within any county, district, city, region or town, however created, elected, appointed or otherwise constituted, established to serve a public purpose; provided, however, that the governing board of a local housing, redevelopment or other similar authority shall be deemed a local public body; provided, further, that the governing board or body of any other authority established by the general court to serve a public purpose in the commonwealth or any part thereof shall be deemed a state public body; provided, further, that "public body" shall not include the general court or the committees or recess commissions thereof, bodies of the judicial branch or bodies appointed by a constitutional officer solely for the purpose of advising a constitutional officer and shall not include the board of bank incorporation or the policyholders protective board; and provided further, that a subcommittee shall include any multiple-member body created to advise or make recommendations to a public body.

Qualification for Office means the election or appointment of a person to a public body and the taking of the oath of office, where required, and shall include qualification for a second or any subsequent term of office. Where no term of office for a member of a public body is specified, the member shall be deemed to be qualified for office on a biennial basis following appointment or election to office.

Regional Public Body means a public body with jurisdiction that extends to two or more municipalities.

Remote Participation means participation by a member of a public body during a meeting of that public body where the member is not physically present at the meeting location.

#### 29.03: Notice Posting Requirements

(1) Requirements Applicable to All Public Bodies.

(a) Except in an emergency, public bodies shall file meeting notices sufficiently in advance of a public meeting to permit posting of the notice at least 48 hours in advance of the public meeting, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20. In an emergency, the notice shall be posted as soon as reasonably possible prior to such meeting.

(b) Meeting notices shall be printed or displayed in a legible, easily understandable format and shall contain the date, time and place of such meeting, and a listing of topics that the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting. The list of topics shall have sufficient specificity to reasonably advise the public of the issues to be discussed at the meeting.

(c) Notices posted under an alternative posting method authorized by 940 CMR 29.03(2) through (5) shall include the same content as required by 940 CMR 29.03(1)(b). If such an alternative posting method is adopted, the municipal clerk, in the case of a municipality, or the body, in all other cases, shall file with the Attorney General written notice of adoption of the alternative method, including the website address where applicable, and any change thereto, and the most current notice posting method on file with the Attorney General shall be consistently used.

(d) The date and time that a meeting notice is posted shall be conspicuously recorded thereon or therewith. If an amendment occurs within 48 hours of a meeting, not including Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays, then the date and time that the meeting notice is amended shall also be conspicuously recorded thereon or therewith.

(2) Requirements Specific to Local Public Bodies.

(a) The official method of posting notice shall be by filing with the municipal clerk, or other person designated by agreement with the municipal clerk, who shall post notice of the meeting in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in, on, or near the municipal building in which the clerk's office is located.

(b) Alternatively, the municipality may adopt the municipal website as the official method of notice posting.

1. The Chief Executive Officer of the municipality, as defined in M.G.L. c. 4, § 7, must authorize or, by a simple majority, vote to adopt the municipal website as the official method of posting notice. Any municipality that has adopted its website as the official method of posting notice by another method as of October 6, 2017 will have satisfied the adoption requirement.
2. If adopted, a description of the website as the notice posting method, including directions on how to locate notices on the website, shall be posted in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours on or adjacent to the



main and handicapped accessible entrances to the municipal building in which the clerk's office is located.

3. Once adopted as the official method of notice posting, the website shall host the official legal notice for meetings of all public bodies within the municipality.
4. Notices must continue to be filed with the municipal clerk, or any other person designated by agreement with the municipal clerk.

(c) A municipality may have only one official notice posting method for the purpose of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, either 940 CMR 29.03(2)(a) or (b). However, nothing precludes a municipality from choosing to post additional notices via other methods, including a newspaper. Such additional notice will not be the official notice for the purposes of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25.

(d) Copies of notices shall also be accessible to the public in the municipal clerk's office during the clerk's business hours.

(3) Requirements Specific to Regional or District Public Bodies.

(a) Notice shall be filed and posted in each city and town within the region or district in the manner prescribed for local public bodies in that city or town.

(b) As an alternative method of notice, a regional or district public body may, by majority vote, adopt the regional or district public body's website as its official notice posting method. A copy of each meeting notice shall be kept by the chair of the public body or the chair's designee in accordance with the applicable records retention schedules. The public body shall file and post notice of the website address, as well as directions on how to locate notices on the website, in each city and town within the region or district in the manner prescribed for local public bodies in that city or town.

(4) Requirements Specific to Regional School Districts.

(a) The secretary of the regional school district committee shall be considered to be its clerk. The clerk of the regional school district committee shall file notice with the municipal clerk of each city and town within such district and each such municipal clerk shall post the notice in the manner prescribed for local public bodies in that city or town.

(b) As an alternative method of notice, a regional school district committee may, by majority vote, adopt the regional school district's website as its official notice posting method. A copy of each meeting notice shall be kept by the secretary of the regional school district committee or the secretary's designee in accordance with the applicable records retention schedules. The regional school district committee shall file and post notice of the website address, as well as directions on how to locate notices on the

website, in each city and town within the region or district in the manner prescribed for local public bodies in that city or town.

(5) Requirements Specific to County Public Bodies.

(a) Notice shall be filed and posted in the office of the county commissioners and a copy of the notice shall be publicly posted in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in such place or places as the county commissioners shall designate for this purpose.

(b) As an alternative method of notice, a county public body may, by majority vote, adopt the county public body's website as its official notice posting method. A copy of the notice shall be kept by the chair of the county public body or the chair's designee in accordance with the applicable records retention schedules. The county public body shall file and post notice of the website address, as well as directions on how to locate notices on the website, in the office of the county commissioners and a copy of the notice shall be publicly posted in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in such place or places as the county commissioners shall designate for this purpose.

(6) Requirements Specific to State Public Bodies. Notice shall be posted on a website. A copy of each notice shall also be sent by first class or electronic mail to the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Regulations Division. The chair of each state public body shall notify the Attorney General in writing of its webpage for listing meeting notices and any change to the webpage location. The public body shall consistently use the most current website location on file with the Attorney General. A copy of the notice shall be kept by the chair of the state public body or the chair's designee in accordance with the applicable records retention schedules.

(7) Websites. Where a public body adopts a website as its method of noticing meetings, it must make every effort to ensure that the website is accessible to the public at all hours. If a website becomes inaccessible to members of the public within 48 hours of a meeting, not including Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays, the municipal clerk or other individual responsible for posting notice to the website must restore the website to accessibility within six hours of the time, during regular business hours, when such individual discovers that the website has become inaccessible. In the event that the website is not restored to accessibility within six business hours of the website's deficiency being discovered, the public body must re-post notice of its meeting for another date and time in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(b).

29.04: Certification

(1) For local public bodies, the municipal clerk, and for all other public bodies, the appointing authority, executive director, or other appropriate administrator or their designees, shall, upon a public body member's qualification for office, either deliver to the public body member, or require the public body member to obtain from the Attorney General's website, the following educational materials:

(a) The Attorney General's Open Meeting Law Guide, which will include an explanation of the requirements of the Open Meeting Law; the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25; and the Attorney General's regulations, 940 CMR 29.00-29.11.

(b) A copy of each Open Meeting Law determination issued to that public body by the Attorney General within the last five years in which the Attorney General found a violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25. Open Meeting Law determinations are available at the Attorney General's website.

(2) Educational materials may be delivered to public body members by paper copy or in digital form.

(3) Within two weeks after receipt of the educational materials, the public body member shall certify, on the form prescribed by the Attorney General, receipt of the educational materials. The municipal clerk, appointing authority, executive director or other appropriate administrator, or their designees, shall maintain the signed certification for each such person, indicating the date the person received the materials.

(4) An individual serving on multiple public bodies must sign a certification for each public body on which he or she serves. A public body member does not need to sign a separate certification when joining a subcommittee of the public body.

(5) A public body member must sign a new certification upon reelection or reappointment to the public body.

#### 29.05: Complaints

(1) All complaints shall be in writing, using the form approved by the Attorney General and available on the Attorney General's website. A public body need not, and the Attorney General will not, investigate or address anonymous complaints. A public body need not address a complaint that is not signed by the complainant. A public body need not address a complaint that is not filed using the Attorney General's complaint form.

(2) Public bodies, or the municipal clerk in the case of a local public body, should provide any person, on request, with an Open Meeting Law Complaint Form. If a paper copy is unavailable, then the public body should direct the requesting party to the Attorney General's website, where an electronic copy of the form will be available for downloading and printing.

(3) For local public bodies, the complainant shall file the complaint with the chair of the public body, who shall disseminate copies of the complaint to the members of the public body. The complainant shall also file a copy of the complaint with the municipal clerk, who shall keep such filings in an orderly fashion for public review on request during regular business hours. For all other public bodies, the complainant shall file the complaint with the chair of the relevant public body, or if there is no chair, then with the public body.

(4) The complaint shall be filed within 30 days of the alleged violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, or if the alleged violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, could not reasonably have been known at the time it occurred, then within 30 days of the date it should reasonably have been discovered.

(5) Within 14 business days after receiving the complaint, unless an extension has been granted by the Attorney General as provided in 940 CMR 29.05(5)(b), the public body shall meet to review the complaint's allegations; take remedial action, if appropriate; and send to the complainant a response and a description of any remedial action taken. The public body shall simultaneously notify the Attorney General that it has sent such materials to the complainant and shall provide the Attorney General with a copy of the complaint, the response, and a description of any remedial action taken.

(a) Any remedial action taken by the public body in response to a complaint under 940 CMR 29.05(5) shall not be admissible as evidence that a violation occurred in any later administrative or judicial proceeding against the public body relating to the alleged violation.

(b) If the public body requires additional time to resolve the complaint, it may obtain an extension from the Attorney General by submitting a written request within 14 business days after receiving the complaint. A request may be submitted by the chair, the public body's attorney, or any person designated by the public body or the chair. The Attorney General will grant an extension if the request demonstrates good cause. Good cause will generally be found if, for example, the public body cannot meet within the 14 business day period to consider proposed remedial action. The Attorney General shall notify the complainant of any extension and the reason for it.

(6) If the public body needs additional information to resolve the complaint, then the chair may request it from the complainant within seven business days of receiving the complaint. The complainant shall respond within ten business days after receiving the request. The public body will then have an additional ten business days after receiving the complainant's response to review the complaint and take any remedial action pursuant to 940 CMR 29.05(5).

(7) If at least 30 days have passed after the complaint was filed with the public body, and if the complainant is unsatisfied with the public body's resolution of the complaint, the complainant may file a complaint with the Attorney General. When filing a complaint with the Attorney General, the complainant shall include a copy of the original complaint along with any other materials the complainant believes are relevant. The Attorney General shall decline to investigate complaints filed with the Attorney General more than 90 days after the alleged violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, or if the alleged violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, could not reasonably have been known at the time it occurred, then within 90 days of the date it should reasonably have been discovered. However, this time may be extended if the Attorney General grants an extension to the public body to respond to a complaint or if the complainant demonstrates good cause for the delay in filing with the Attorney General.

(8) The Attorney General shall acknowledge receipt of all complaints and will resolve them within a reasonable period of time, generally 90 days.

(9) Mediation to Resolve a Complaint.

(a) If a complainant files five complaints alleging violations of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, with the same public body or within the same municipality within 12 months, upon the fifth or subsequent complaint to that public body or a public body within that municipality within the 12-month period, the public body may request mediation with the complainant, at the public body's expense, to resolve the complaint. A mediator is defined by M.G.L. c. 233, § 23C, and will be selected by the Attorney General.

(b) A public body must request mediation prior to, or with, its response to the complaint. If the mediation does not produce an agreement, the public body will have ten business days from the last joint meeting with the mediator to respond to the complaint.

(c) A public body may participate in mediation in open session, in executive session through M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(9), or by designating a representative to participate on behalf of the public body.

(d) If the complainant declines to participate in mediation after a public body's request in accordance with 940 CMR 29.05(9)(a), the Attorney General may decline to review the complaint if it is thereafter filed with the Attorney General.

(e) If the mediation does not resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of both parties, then the complainant may file a copy of his or her complaint with the Attorney General and request the Attorney General's review. The complaint must be filed with the Attorney General within 30 days of the last joint meeting with the mediator.

(f) Any written agreement reached in mediation shall become a public record in its entirety and must be publicly disclosed at the next meeting of the public body following execution of the agreement.

(g) Nothing in this section shall prevent a complainant from filing subsequent complaints, however public bodies may continue to request mediation in an effort to resolve complaints in accordance with 940 CMR 29.05(9)(a).

(h) Nothing in this section shall prevent a public body or complainant from seeking mediation to resolve any complaint. However, only mediation requests that follow the requirements of 940 CMR 29.05(9)(a) will trigger the application of 940 CMR 29.05(9)(d).

29.06: Investigation

Following a timely complaint filed pursuant to 940 CMR 29.05, where the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that a violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, has occurred, then the Attorney General may conduct an investigation.

(1) The Attorney General shall notify the public body or person that is the subject of a complaint of the existence of the investigation within a reasonable period of time. The Attorney General shall also notify the public body or person of the nature of the alleged violation.

(2) Upon notice of the investigation, the subject of the investigation shall provide the Attorney General with all information relevant to the investigation. The subject may also submit a memorandum or other writing to the Attorney General, addressing the allegations being investigated.

If the subject of the investigation fails to voluntarily provide the necessary or relevant information within 30 days of receiving notice of the investigation, the Attorney General may issue one or more civil investigative demands to obtain the information in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 24(a), to:

(a) Take testimony under oath;

(b) Examine or cause to be examined any documentary material; or

(c) Require attendance during such examination of documentary material by any person having knowledge of the documentary material and take testimony under oath or acknowledgment in respect of any such documentary material.

Any documentary material or other information produced by any person pursuant to 940 CMR 29.06 shall not, unless otherwise ordered by a court of the Commonwealth for good cause shown, be disclosed without that person's consent by the Attorney General to any person other than the Attorney General's authorized agent or representative. However, the Attorney General may disclose the material in court pleadings or other papers filed in court; or, to the extent necessary, in an administrative hearing or in a written determination to resolve the investigation pursuant to 940 CMR 29.07.

#### 29.07: Resolution

(1) No Violation. If the Attorney General determines, after investigation, that M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, has not been violated, the Attorney General shall issue a written determination to the subject of the complaint and copy any complainant.

(2) Violation Resolved Without Hearing. If the Attorney General determines after investigation that M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, has been violated, the Attorney General may resolve the investigation without a hearing. The Attorney General shall determine whether the relevant public body, one or more of its members, or both, were responsible. The Attorney General will notify, in writing, any complainant of the investigation's resolution. Upon finding a violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, the Attorney General may take one of the following actions:

(a) Informal Action. The Attorney General may resolve the investigation with a letter or other appropriate form of written communication that explains the violation and clarifies the subject's obligations under M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, providing the subject with a reasonable period of time to comply with any outstanding obligations.

(b) Formal Order. The Attorney General may resolve the investigation with a formal order. The order may require:

1. immediate and future compliance with M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25;
2. attendance at a training session authorized by the Attorney General;
3. nullification of any action taken at the relevant meeting, in whole or in part;
4. that minutes, records or other materials be made public;
5. that an employee be reinstated without loss of compensation, seniority, tenure or other benefits; or
6. other appropriate action.

Orders shall be available on the Attorney General's website.

(3) Violation Resolved After Hearing. The Attorney General may conduct a hearing where the Attorney General deems appropriate. The hearing shall be conducted pursuant to 801 CMR 1.00, et seq., as modified by any regulations issued by the Attorney General. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Attorney General shall determine whether a violation of M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, occurred and whether the public body, one or more of its members, or both, were responsible. The Attorney General will notify, in writing, any complainant of the investigation's resolution. Upon a finding that a violation occurred, the Attorney General may order:

- (a) immediate and future compliance with M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25;
- (b) attendance at a training session authorized by the Attorney General;
- (c) nullification of any action taken at the relevant meeting, in whole or in part;
- (d) imposition of a fine upon the public body of not more than \$1,000 for each intentional violation; however, a fine will not be imposed where a public body or public body member acted in good faith compliance with the advice of the public body's legal counsel, in accordance with M.G.L. 30A, § 23(g);
- (e) that an employee be reinstated without loss of compensation, seniority, tenure or other benefits;

- (f) that minutes, records or other materials be made public; or
- (g) other appropriate action.

Orders issued following a hearing shall be available on the Attorney General's website.

(4) A public body subject to an order of the Attorney General following a written determination issued pursuant to 940 CMR 29.07 shall notify the Attorney General in writing of its compliance with the order within 30 days of receipt of the order, unless otherwise indicated by the order itself. A public body need not notify the Attorney General of its compliance with an order requiring solely immediate and future compliance pursuant to 940 CMR 29.07(2)(b)(1) or 940 CMR 29.07(3)(a).

(5) A public body or any member of a body aggrieved by any order issued by the Attorney General under 940 CMR 29.07 may obtain judicial review of the order through an action in Superior Court seeking relief in the nature of certiorari. Any such action must be commenced in Superior Court within 21 days of receipt of the order.

#### 29.08: Advisory Opinions

The Attorney General will generally not issue advisory opinions. However, the Attorney General may issue written guidance to address common requests for interpretation. Such written guidance will appear on the Attorney General's website.

#### 29.09: Other Enforcement Actions

Nothing in 940 CMR 29.06 or 29.07 shall limit the Attorney General's authority to file a civil action to enforce M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 23(f).

#### 29.10: Remote Participation

(1) Preamble. Remote participation may be permitted subject to the following procedures and restrictions. However, the Attorney General strongly encourages members of public bodies to physically attend meetings whenever possible. By promulgating 940 CMR 29.10, the Attorney General hopes to promote greater participation in government. Members of public bodies have a responsibility to ensure that remote participation in meetings is not used in a way that would defeat the purposes of the M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18 through 25, namely promoting transparency with regard to deliberations and decisions on which public policy is based.

(2) Adoption of Remote Participation. Remote participation in meetings of public bodies is not permitted unless the practice has been adopted as follows:

(a) Local Public Bodies. The Chief Executive Officer, as defined in M.G.L. c. 4, § 7, must authorize or, by a simple majority, vote to allow remote participation in accordance with the requirements of 940 CMR 29.10, with that authorization or vote applying to all subsequent meetings of all local public bodies in that municipality.



(b) Regional or District Public Bodies. The regional or district public body must, by a simple majority, vote to allow remote participation in accordance with the requirements of 940 CMR 29.10, with that vote applying to all subsequent meetings of that public body and its committees.

(c) Regional School Districts. The regional school district committee must, by a simple majority, vote to allow remote participation in accordance with the requirements of 940 CMR 29.10, with that vote applying to all subsequent meetings of that public body and its committees.

(d) County Public Bodies. The county commissioners must, by a simple majority, vote to allow remote participation in accordance with the requirements of 940 CMR 29.10, with that vote applying to all subsequent meetings of all county public bodies in that county.

(e) State Public Bodies. The state public body must, by a simple majority, vote to allow remote participation in accordance with the requirements of 940 CMR 29.10, with that vote applying to all subsequent meetings of that public body and its committees.

(f) Retirement Boards. A retirement board created pursuant to M.G.L. c. 32, § 20 or M.G.L. c. 34B, § 19 must, by a simple majority, vote to allow remote participation in accordance with the requirements of 940 CMR 29.10, with that vote applying to all subsequent meetings of that public body and its committees.

(g) Local Commissions on Disability. In accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(e), a local commission on disability may by majority vote of the commissioners at a regular meeting authorize remote participation applicable to a specific meeting or generally to all of the commission's meetings. If a local commission on disability is authorized to utilize remote participation, a physical quorum of that commission's members shall not be required to be present at the meeting location; provided, however, that the chair or, in the chair's absence, the person authorized to chair the meeting, shall be physically present at the meeting location. The commission shall comply with all other requirements of law.

(3) Revocation of Remote Participation. Any person or entity with the authority to adopt remote participation pursuant to 940 CMR 29.10(2) may revoke that adoption in the same manner.

(4) Minimum Requirements for Remote Participation.

(a) Members of a public body who participate remotely and all persons present at the meeting location shall be clearly audible to each other, as required by M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(d);

(b) A quorum of the body, including the chair or, in the chair's absence, the person authorized to chair the meeting, shall be physically present at the meeting location, as required by M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(d);

(c) Members of public bodies who participate remotely may vote and shall not be deemed absent for the purposes of M.G.L. c. 39, § 23D.

(5) Permissible Reason for Remote Participation. If remote participation has been adopted in accordance with 940 CMR 29.10(2), a member of a public body shall be permitted to participate remotely in a meeting, in accordance with the procedures described in 940 CMR 29.10(7), only if physical attendance would be unreasonably difficult.

(6) Technology.

(a) The following media are acceptable methods for remote participation. Remote participation by any other means is not permitted. Accommodations shall be made for any public body member who requires TTY service, video relay service, or other form of adaptive telecommunications.

i. telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio or video conferencing;

ii. any other technology that enables the remote participant and all persons present at the meeting location to be clearly audible to one another.

(b) When video technology is in use, the remote participant shall be clearly visible to all persons present in the meeting location.

(c) The public body shall determine which of the acceptable methods may be used by its members.

(d) The chair or, in the chair's absence, the person chairing the meeting, may decide how to address technical difficulties that arise as a result of utilizing remote participation, but is encouraged, wherever possible, to suspend discussion while reasonable efforts are made to correct any problem that interferes with a remote participant's ability to hear or be heard clearly by all persons present at the meeting location. If technical difficulties result in a remote participant being disconnected from the meeting, that fact and the time at which the disconnection occurred shall be noted in the meeting minutes.

(e) The amount and source of payment for any costs associated with remote participation shall be determined by the applicable adopting entity identified in 940 CMR 29.10(2).

(7) Procedures for Remote Participation.

(a) Any member of a public body who wishes to participate remotely shall, as soon as reasonably possible prior to a meeting, notify the chair or, in the chair's absence, the person chairing the meeting, of his or her desire to do so and the reason for and facts supporting his or her request.

(b) At the start of the meeting, the chair shall announce the name of any member who will be participating remotely. This information shall also be recorded in the meeting minutes.

(c) All votes taken during any meeting in which a member participates remotely shall be by roll call vote.

(d) A member participating remotely may participate in an executive session, but shall state at the start of any such session that no other person is present and/or able to hear the discussion at the remote location, unless presence of that person is approved by a simple majority vote of the public body.

(e) When feasible, the chair or, in the chair's absence, the person chairing the meeting, shall distribute to remote participants, in advance of the meeting, copies of any documents or exhibits that he or she reasonably anticipates will be used during the meeting. If used during the meeting, such documents shall be part of the official record of the meeting, and shall be listed in the meeting minutes and retained in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 22.

(8) Further Restriction by Adopting Authority. 940 CMR 29.10 does not prohibit any person or entity with the authority to adopt remote participation pursuant to 940 CMR 29.10(2) from enacting policies, laws, rules or regulations that prohibit or further restrict the use of remote participation by public bodies within that person or entity's jurisdiction, provided those policies, laws, rules or regulations do not violate state or federal law.

(9) Remedy for Violation. If the Attorney General determines, after investigation, that 940 CMR 29.10 has been violated, the Attorney General may resolve the investigation by ordering the public body to temporarily or permanently discontinue its use of remote participation.

#### 29.11: Meeting Minutes

(1) A public body shall create and maintain accurate minutes of all meetings, including executive sessions, setting forth the date, time and place, the members present or absent, a summary of the discussions on each subject, a list of documents and other exhibits used at the meeting, the decisions made and the actions taken at each meeting, including the record of all votes, in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 22(a).

(2) Minutes of all open and executive sessions shall be created and approved in a timely manner. A "timely manner" will generally be considered to be within the next three public body meetings or within 30 days, whichever is later, unless the public body can show good cause for further delay. The Attorney General encourages public bodies to approve minutes at the next meeting whenever possible.

REGULATORY AUTHORITY 940 CMR 29.00: M.G.L. c. 30A, § 25(a) and (b).