



## AGENDA

### MEASURE O CITIZENS' OVERSIGHT BOARD COMMITTEE

#### SPECIAL MEETING

July 22, 2019

5:30 p.m.

Community Meeting Center  
11300 Stanford Avenue  
Garden Grove, CA 92840

Members of the public desiring to speak on any item of public interest, including any item on the agenda, must do so during Oral Communications at the beginning of the meeting. Each speaker shall be limited to five (5) minutes.

Any person requiring auxiliary aids and services due to a disability should contact the City Clerk's Office at (714) 741-5040 to arrange for special accommodations. (Government Code §5494.3.2).

All revised or additional documents and writings related to any items on the agenda, which are distributed to all of the Board Members within 72 hours of a meeting, shall be available for public inspection (1) at the Finance Department during normal business hours; and (2) at the Community Meeting Center – at the time of the meeting.

Agenda item descriptions are intended to give a brief, general description of the item to advise the public of the item's general nature. The Measure O Committee may take legislative action deemed appropriate with respect to the item and is not limited to the recommended action indicated in staff reports or the agenda.

ROLL CALL – BOARD MEMBER LESLIE MALO, BOARD MEMBER SANDRA THOMAS, BOARD MEMBER MARISA SALICOS, BOARD MEMBER STEVEN SANDERS, BOARD MEMBER CLAIRE BISCHOFF, BOARD MEMBER MARK MACKANIC, BOARD MEMBER SONNY NGUYEN.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. SELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR
2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS
3. OVERVIEW OF BROWN ACT
4. CODE OF ETHICS
5. MANDATORY HARASSMENT TRAINING
6. REVIEW OF COMMITTEE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES
7. FISCAL YEARS 2019-21 BUDGET AT A GLANCE – MEASURE O REVENUE ESTIMATES AND PROPOSED USES

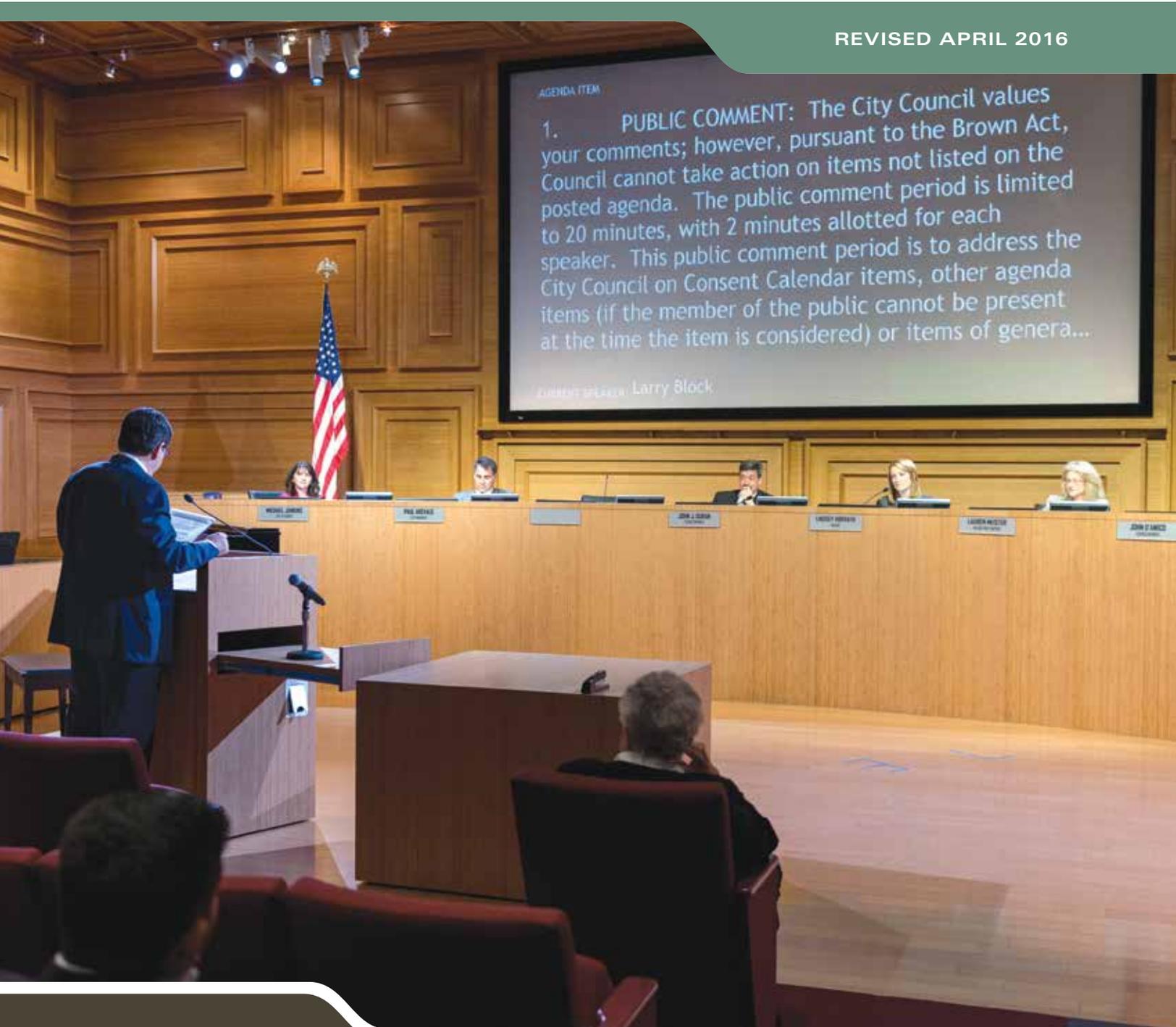
8. NEXT MEETING DATE AND TENTATIVE TOPICS
9. MATTERS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STAFF
10. ADJOURNMENT

# BROWN ACT

# Open & Public V

A GUIDE TO THE RALPH M. BROWN ACT

REVISED APRIL 2016



AGENDA ITEM

1. PUBLIC COMMENT: The City Council values your comments; however, pursuant to the Brown Act, Council cannot take action on items not listed on the posted agenda. The public comment period is limited to 20 minutes, with 2 minutes allotted for each speaker. This public comment period is to address the City Council on Consent Calendar items, other agenda items (if the member of the public cannot be present at the time the item is considered) or items of genera...

CURRENT SPEAKER: Larry Block

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The League thanks the following individuals for their work on this publication:

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# Open & Public V

A GUIDE TO THE RALPH M. BROWN ACT

REVISED APRIL 2016

<b>CHAPTER 1: IT IS THE PEOPLE'S BUSINESS</b> .....	5
<b>CHAPTER 2: LEGISLATIVE BODIES</b> .....	11
<b>CHAPTER 3: MEETINGS</b> .....	17
<b>CHAPTER 4: AGENDAS, NOTICES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</b> .....	29
<b>CHAPTER 5: CLOSED SESSIONS</b> .....	41
<b>CHAPTER 6: REMEDIES</b> .....	55

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1: IT IS THE PEOPLE’S BUSINESS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
The right of access .....	6
Broad coverage .....	6
Narrow exemptions .....	7
Public participation in meetings .....	7
Controversy .....	8
Beyond the law — good business practices.....	8
Achieving balance .....	9
Historical note .....	9
<b>CHAPTER 2: LEGISLATIVE BODIES.....</b>	<b>11</b>
What is a “legislative body” of a local agency? .....	12
What is <u>not</u> a “legislative body” for purposes of the Brown Act? .....	14
<b>CHAPTER 3: MEETINGS.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Brown Act meetings.....	18
Six exceptions to the meeting definition .....	18
Collective briefings.....	21
Retreats or workshops of legislative bodies.....	21
Serial meetings.....	21
Informal gatherings .....	24
Technological conferencing .....	24
Location of meetings.....	25
<b>CHAPTER 4: AGENDAS, NOTICES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION .....</b>	<b>29</b>
Agendas for regular meetings.....	30
Mailed agenda upon written request.....	31
Notice requirements for special meetings .....	32
Notices and agendas for adjourned and continued meetings and hearings .....	32
Notice requirements for emergency meetings .....	32
Notice of compensation for simultaneous or serial meetings .....	33
Educational agency meetings .....	33
Notice requirements for tax or assessment meetings and hearings .....	33

Non-agenda items.....	34
Responding to the public .....	34
The right to attend and observe meetings .....	35
Records and recordings .....	36
The public’s place on the agenda .....	37
<b>CHAPTER 5: CLOSED SESSIONS .....</b>	<b>41</b>
Agendas and reports.....	42
Litigation.....	43
Real estate negotiations .....	45
Public employment .....	46
Labor negotiations .....	47
Labor negotiations — school and community college districts .....	48
Other Education Code exceptions .....	48
Joint Powers Authorities .....	48
License applicants with criminal records .....	49
Public security.....	49
Multijurisdictional law enforcement agency .....	49
Hospital peer review and trade secrets.....	49
Other legislative bases for closed session.....	50
Who may attend closed sessions .....	50
The confidentiality of closed session discussions .....	50
<b>CHAPTER 6: REMEDIES .....</b>	<b>55</b>
Invalidation .....	56
Applicability to Past Actions .....	57
Civil action to prevent future violations.....	57
Costs and attorney’s fees .....	58
Criminal complaints .....	58
Voluntary resolution.....	59





# Chapter 1

## IT IS THE PEOPLE’S BUSINESS

The right of access.....	6
Broad coverage .....	6
Narrow exemptions .....	7
Public participation in meetings .....	7
Controversy.....	8
Beyond the law — good business practices .....	8
Achieving balance .....	9
Historical note.....	9

# Chapter 1

## IT IS THE PEOPLE'S BUSINESS



### The right of access

Two key parts of the Brown Act have not changed since its adoption in 1953. One is the Brown Act's initial section, declaring the Legislature's intent:

*"In enacting this chapter, the Legislature finds and declares that the public commissions, boards and councils and the other public agencies in this State exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of the law that their actions be taken openly and that their deliberations be conducted openly."*

*"The people of this State do not yield their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them. The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know. The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control*

*over the instruments they have created."*<sup>1</sup>

The people reconfirmed that intent 50 years later in the November 2004 election by adopting Proposition 59, amending the California Constitution to include a public right of access to government information:

*"The people have the right of access to information concerning the conduct of the people's business, and, therefore, the meetings of public bodies and the writings of public officials and agencies shall be open to public scrutiny."*<sup>2</sup>

The Brown Act's other unchanged provision is a single sentence:

*"All meetings of the legislative body of a local agency shall be open and public, and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting of the legislative body of a local agency, except as otherwise provided in this chapter."*<sup>3</sup>

That one sentence is by far the most important of the entire Brown Act. If the opening is the soul, that sentence is the heart of the Brown Act.

### Broad coverage

The Brown Act covers members of virtually every type of local government body, elected or appointed, decision-making or advisory. Some types of private organizations are covered, as are newly-elected members of a legislative body, even before they take office.

Similarly, meetings subject to the Brown Act are not limited to face-to-face gatherings. They also include any communication medium or device through which a majority of a legislative body

**PRACTICE TIP:** The key to the Brown Act is a single sentence. In summary, all meetings shall be **open and public** except when the Brown Act authorizes otherwise.

discusses, deliberates or takes action on an item of business outside of a noticed meeting. They include meetings held from remote locations by teleconference.

New communication technologies present new Brown Act challenges. For example, common email practices of forwarding or replying to messages can easily lead to a serial meeting prohibited by the Brown Act, as can participation by members of a legislative body in an internet chatroom or blog dialogue. Communicating during meetings using electronic technology (such as laptop computers, tablets, or smart phones) may create the perception that private communications are influencing the outcome of decisions; some state legislatures have banned the practice. On the other hand, widespread cablecasting and web streaming of meetings has greatly expanded public access to the decision-making process.

### **Narrow exemptions**

The express purpose of the Brown Act is to assure that local government agencies conduct the public's business openly and publicly. Courts and the California Attorney General usually broadly construe the Brown Act in favor of greater public access and narrowly construe exemptions to its general rules.<sup>4</sup>

Generally, public officials should think of themselves as living in glass houses, and that they may only draw the curtains when it is in the public interest to preserve confidentiality. Closed sessions may be held only as specifically authorized by the provisions of the Brown Act itself.

The Brown Act, however, is limited to meetings among a majority of the members of multi-member government bodies when the subject relates to local agency business. It does not apply to independent conduct of individual decision-makers. It does not apply to social, ceremonial, educational, and other gatherings as long as a majority of the members of a body do not discuss issues related to their local agency's business. Meetings of temporary advisory committees — as distinguished from standing committees — made up solely of less than a quorum of a legislative body are not subject to the Brown Act.

The law does not apply to local agency staff or employees, but they may facilitate a violation by acting as a conduit for discussion, deliberation, or action by the legislative body.<sup>5</sup>

The law, on the one hand, recognizes the need of individual local officials to meet and discuss matters with their constituents. On the other hand, it requires — with certain specific exceptions to protect the community and preserve individual rights — that the decision-making process be public. Sometimes the boundary between the two is not easy to draw.

### **Public participation in meetings**

In addition to requiring the public's business to be conducted in open, noticed meetings, the Brown Act also extends to the public the right to participate in meetings. Individuals, lobbyists, and members of the news media possess the right to attend, record, broadcast, and participate in public meetings. The public's participation is further enhanced by the Brown Act's requirement that a meaningful agenda be posted in advance of meetings, by limiting discussion and action to matters listed on the agenda, and by requiring that meeting materials be made available.

Legislative bodies may, however, adopt reasonable regulations on public testimony and the conduct of public meetings, including measures to address disruptive conduct and irrelevant speech.

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**PRACTICE TIP:** Think of the government's house as being made of glass. The curtains may be drawn only to further the public's interest. A local policy on the use of laptop computers, tablets, and smart phones during Brown Act meetings may help avoid problems.

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### Controversy

Not surprisingly, the Brown Act has been a source of confusion and controversy since its inception. News media and government watchdogs often argue the law is toothless, pointing out that there has never been a single criminal conviction for a violation. They often suspect that closed sessions are being misused.

Public officials complain that the Brown Act makes it difficult to respond to constituents and requires public discussions of items better discussed privately — such as why a particular person should not be appointed to a board or commission. Many elected officials find the Brown Act inconsistent with their private business experiences. Closed meetings can be more efficient; they eliminate grandstanding and promote candor. The techniques that serve well in business — the working lunch, the sharing of information through a series of phone calls or emails, the backroom conversations and compromises — are often not possible under the Brown Act.

As a matter of public policy, California (along with many other states) has concluded that there is more to be gained than lost by conducting public business in the open. Government behind closed doors may well be efficient and business-like, but it may be perceived as unresponsive and untrustworthy.

**PRACTICE TIP:** Transparency is a foundational value for ethical government practices. The Brown Act is a floor, not a ceiling, for conduct.

### Beyond the law — good business practices

Violations of the Brown Act can lead to invalidation of an agency's action, payment of a challenger's attorney fees, public embarrassment, even criminal prosecution. But the Brown Act is a floor, not a ceiling for conduct of public officials. This guide is focused not only on the Brown Act as a minimum standard, but also on meeting practices or activities that, legal or not, are likely to create controversy. Problems may crop up, for example, when agenda descriptions are too brief or vague, when an informal get-together takes on the appearance of a meeting, when an agency conducts too much of its business in closed session or discusses matters in closed session that are beyond the authorized scope, or when controversial issues arise that are not on the agenda.

The Brown Act allows a legislative body to adopt practices and requirements for greater access to meetings for itself and its subordinate committees and bodies that are more stringent than the law itself requires.<sup>6</sup> Rather than simply restate the basic requirements of the Brown Act, local open meeting policies should strive to anticipate and prevent problems in areas where the Brown Act does not provide full guidance. As with the adoption of any other significant policy, public comment should be solicited.



A local policy could build on these basic Brown Act goals:

- A legislative body's need to get its business done smoothly;
- The public's right to participate meaningfully in meetings, and to review documents used in decision-making at a relevant point in time;
- A local agency's right to confidentially address certain negotiations, personnel matters, claims and litigation; and
- The right of the press to fully understand and communicate public agency decision-making.

An explicit and comprehensive public meeting and information policy, especially if reviewed periodically, can be an important element in maintaining or improving public relations. Such a policy exceeds the absolute requirements of the law — but if the law were enough, this guide would be unnecessary. A narrow legalistic approach will not avoid or resolve potential controversies. An agency should consider going beyond the law, and look at its unique circumstances and determine if there is a better way to prevent potential problems and promote public trust. At the very least, local agencies need to think about how their agendas are structured in order to make Brown Act compliance easier. They need to plan carefully to make sure public participation fits smoothly into the process.

## Achieving balance

The Brown Act should be neither an excuse for hiding the ball nor a mechanism for hindering efficient and orderly meetings. The Brown Act represents a balance among the interests of constituencies whose interests do not always coincide. It calls for openness in local government, yet should allow government to function responsively and productively.

There must be both adequate notice of what discussion and action is to occur during a meeting as well as a normal degree of spontaneity in the dialogue between elected officials and their constituents.

The ability of an elected official to confer with constituents or colleagues must be balanced against the important public policy prohibiting decision-making outside of public meetings.

In the end, implementation of the Brown Act must ensure full participation of the public and preserve the integrity of the decision-making process, yet not stifle government officials and impede the effective and natural operation of government.

## Historical note

In late 1951, *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Mike Harris spent six weeks looking into the way local agencies conducted meetings. State law had long required that business be done in public, but Harris discovered secret meetings or caucuses were common. He wrote a 10-part series on “Your Secret Government” that ran in May and June 1952.

Out of the series came a decision to push for a new state open meeting law. Harris and Richard (Bud) Carpenter, legal counsel for the League of California Cities, drafted such a bill and Assembly Member Ralph M. Brown agreed to carry it. The Legislature passed the bill and Governor Earl Warren signed it into law in 1953.

The Ralph M. Brown Act, known as the Brown Act, has evolved under a series of amendments and court decisions, and has been the model for other open meeting laws — such as the Bagley-Keene Act, enacted in 1967 to cover state agencies.

Assembly Member Brown is best known for the open meeting law that carries his name. He was elected to the Assembly in 1942 and served 19 years, including the last three years as Speaker. He then became an appellate court justice.

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**PRACTICE TIP:** The Brown Act should be viewed as a tool to facilitate the business of local government agencies. Local policies that go beyond the minimum requirements of law may help instill public confidence and avoid problems.

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**ENDNOTES:**

- 1 California Government Code section 54950
- 2 California Constitution, Art. 1, section 3(b)(1)
- 3 California Government Code section 54953(a)
- 4 This principle of broad construction when it furthers public access and narrow construction if a provision limits public access is also stated in the amendment to the State's Constitution adopted by Proposition 59 in 2004. California Constitution, Art. 1, section 3(b)(2).
- 5 California Government Code section 54952.2(b)(2) and (c)(1); *Wolfe v. City of Fremont* (2006) 144 Cal.App.4th 533
- 6 California Government Code section 54953.7

Updates to this publication responding to changes in the Brown Act or new court interpretations are available at [www.cacities.org/opengovernment](http://www.cacities.org/opengovernment). A current version of the Brown Act may be found at [www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov).



# Chapter 2

## LEGISLATIVE BODIES

What is a “legislative body” of a local agency? ..... 12

What is not a “legislative body” for purposes of the Brown Act? ..... 14

# Chapter 2

## LEGISLATIVE BODIES

*The Brown Act applies to the legislative bodies of local agencies. It defines “legislative body” broadly to include just about every type of decision-making body of a local agency.<sup>1</sup>*



### What is a “legislative body” of a local agency?

A “legislative body” includes:

- **The “governing body”** of a local agency<sup>2</sup> and certain of its subsidiary bodies; “or any other local body created by state or federal statute.”<sup>2</sup> This includes city councils, boards of supervisors, school boards and boards of trustees of special districts. A “local agency” is any city, county, city and county, school district, municipal corporation, successor agency to a redevelopment agency, district, political subdivision or other local public agency.<sup>3</sup> A housing authority is a local agency under the Brown Act even though it is created by and is an agent of the state.<sup>4</sup> The California Attorney General has opined that air pollution control districts and regional open space districts are also covered.<sup>5</sup> Entities created pursuant to joint powers agreements are also local agencies within the meaning of the Brown Act.<sup>6</sup>

- **Newly-elected members** of a legislative body who have not yet assumed office must conform to the requirements of the Brown Act as if already in office.<sup>7</sup> Thus, meetings between incumbents and newly-elected members of a legislative body, such as a meeting between two outgoing members and a member-elect of a five-member body, could violate the Brown Act.

**Q.** On the morning following the election to a five-member legislative body of a local agency, two successful candidates, neither an incumbent, meet with an incumbent member of the legislative body for a celebratory breakfast. Does this violate the Brown Act?

**A.** *It might, and absolutely would if the conversation turns to agency business. Even though the candidates-elect have not officially been sworn in, the Brown Act applies. If purely a social event, there is no violation but it would be preferable if others were invited to attend to avoid the appearance of impropriety.*

- **Appointed bodies** — whether permanent or temporary, decision-making or advisory — including planning commissions, civil service commissions and other subsidiary committees, boards, and bodies. Volunteer groups, executive search committees, task forces, and blue ribbon committees created by formal action of the governing body are legislative bodies. When the members of two or more legislative bodies are appointed to serve on an entirely separate advisory group, the resulting body may be subject to the

**PRACTICE TIP:** The prudent presumption is that an advisory committee or task force is subject to the Brown Act. Even if one clearly is not, it may want to comply with the Brown Act. Public meetings may reduce the possibility of misunderstandings and controversy.

Brown Act. In one reported case, a city council created a committee of two members of the city council and two members of the city planning commission to review qualifications of prospective planning commissioners and make recommendations to the council. The court held that their joint mission made them a legislative body subject to the Brown Act. Had the two committees remained separate; and met only to exchange information and report back to their respective boards, they would have been exempt from the Brown Act.<sup>8</sup>

- **Standing committees** of a legislative body, irrespective of their composition, which have either: (1) a continuing subject matter jurisdiction; or (2) a meeting schedule fixed by charter, ordinance, resolution, or formal action of a legislative body.<sup>9</sup> Even if it comprises less than a quorum of the governing body, a standing committee is subject to the Brown Act. For example, if a governing body creates long-term committees on budget and finance or on public safety, those are standing committees subject to the Brown Act. Further, according to the California Attorney General, function over form controls. For example, a statement by the legislative body that the advisory committee “shall not exercise continuing subject matter jurisdiction” or the fact that the committee does not have a fixed meeting schedule is not determinative.<sup>10</sup> “Formal action” by a legislative body includes authorization given to the agency’s executive officer to appoint an advisory committee pursuant to agency-adopted policy.<sup>11</sup>
- The governing body of any **private organization** either: (1) created by the legislative body in order to exercise authority that may lawfully be delegated by such body to a private corporation, limited liability company or other entity; or (2) that receives agency funding and whose governing board includes a member of the legislative body of the local agency appointed by the legislative body as a full voting member of the private entity’s governing board.<sup>12</sup> These include some nonprofit corporations created by local agencies.<sup>13</sup> If a local agency contracts with a private firm for a service (for example, payroll, janitorial, or food services), the private firm is not covered by the Brown Act.<sup>14</sup> When a member of a legislative body sits on a board of a private organization as a private person and is not appointed by the legislative body, the board will not be subject to the Brown Act. Similarly, when the legislative body appoints someone other than one of its own members to such boards, the Brown Act does not apply. Nor does it apply when a private organization merely receives agency funding.<sup>15</sup>

**Q:** The local chamber of commerce is funded in part by the city. The mayor sits on the chamber’s board of directors. Is the chamber board a legislative body subject to the Brown Act?

**A:** *Maybe. If the chamber’s governing documents require the mayor to be on the board and the city council appoints the mayor to that position, the board is a legislative body. If, however, the chamber board independently appoints the mayor to its board, or the mayor attends chamber board meetings in a purely advisory capacity, it is not.*

**Q:** If a community college district board creates an auxiliary organization to operate a campus bookstore or cafeteria, is the board of the organization a legislative body?

**A:** *Yes. But, if the district instead contracts with a private firm to operate the bookstore or cafeteria, the Brown Act would not apply to the private firm.*

- **Certain types of hospital operators.** A lessee of a hospital (or portion of a hospital)

**PRACTICE TIP:** It can be difficult to determine whether a subcommittee of a body falls into the category of a standing committee or an exempt temporary committee. Suppose a committee is created to explore the renewal of a franchise or a topic of similarly limited scope and duration. Is it an exempt temporary committee or a non-exempt standing committee? The answer may depend on factors such as how meeting schedules are determined, the scope of the committee’s charge, or whether the committee exists long enough to have “continuing jurisdiction.”

first leased under Health and Safety Code subsection 32121(p) after January 1, 1994, which exercises “material authority” delegated to it by a local agency, whether or not such lessee is organized and operated by the agency or by a delegated authority.<sup>16</sup>

### What is not a “legislative body” for purposes of the Brown Act?

- A temporary advisory committee composed **solely of less than a quorum** of the legislative body that serves a limited or single purpose, that is not perpetual, and that will be dissolved once its specific task is completed is not subject to the Brown Act.<sup>17</sup> Temporary committees are sometimes called *ad hoc* committees, a term not used in the Brown Act. Examples include an advisory committee composed of less than a quorum created to interview candidates for a vacant position or to meet with representatives of other entities to exchange information on a matter of concern to the agency, such as traffic congestion.<sup>18</sup>
- Groups advisory to a single decision-maker or appointed by staff are not covered. The Brown Act applies only to committees created by formal action of the legislative body and not to committees created by others. A committee advising a superintendent of schools would not be covered by the Brown Act. However, the same committee, if created by formal action of the school board, would be covered.<sup>19</sup>

**Q.** A member of the legislative body of a local agency informally establishes an advisory committee of five residents to advise her on issues as they arise. Does the Brown Act apply to this committee?

**A.** *No, because the committee has not been established by formal action of the legislative body.*

**Q.** During a meeting of the city council, the council directs the city manager to form an advisory committee of residents to develop recommendations for a new ordinance. The city manager forms the committee and appoints its members; the committee is instructed to direct its recommendations to the city manager. Does the Brown Act apply to this committee?

**A.** *Possibly, because the direction from the city council might be regarded as a formal action of the body notwithstanding that the city manager controls the committee.*

- Individual decision makers who are not elected or appointed members of a legislative body are not covered by the Brown Act. For example, a disciplinary hearing presided over by a department head or a meeting of agency department heads are not subject to the Brown Act since such assemblies are not those of a legislative body.<sup>20</sup>
- Public employees, each acting individually and not engaging in collective deliberation on a specific issue, such as the drafting and review of an agreement, do not constitute a legislative body under the Brown Act, even if the drafting and review process was established by a legislative body.<sup>21</sup>
- County central committees of political parties are also not Brown Act bodies.<sup>22</sup>

#### ENDNOTES:

1 *Taxpayers for Livable Communities v. City of Malibu* (2005) 126 Cal.App.4th 1123, 1127

- 2 California Government Code section 54952(a) and (b)
- 3 California Government Code section 54951; Health and Safety Code section 34173(g) (successor agencies to former redevelopment agencies subject to the Brown Act). But see Education Code section 35147, which exempts certain school councils and school site advisory committees from the Brown Act and imposes upon them a separate set of rules.
- 4 *Torres v. Board of Commissioners of Housing Authority of Tulare County* (1979) 89 Cal.App.3d 545, 549-550
- 5 71 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 96 (1988); 73 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 1 (1990)
- 6 *McKee v. Los Angeles Interagency Metropolitan Police Apprehension Crime Task Force* (2005) 134 Cal. App.4th 354, 362
- 7 California Government Code section 54952.1
- 8 *Joiner v. City of Sebastopol* (1981) 125 Cal.App.3d 799, 804-805
- 9 California Government Code section 54952(b)
- 10 79 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 69 (1996)
- 11 *Frazer v. Dixon Unified School District* (1993) 18 Cal.App.4th 781, 793
- 12 California Government Code section 54952(c)(1). Regarding private organizations that receive local agency funding, the same rule applies to a full voting member appointed prior to February 9, 1996 who, after that date, is made a non-voting board member by the legislative body. California Government Code section 54952(c)(2)
- 13 California Government Code section 54952(c)(1)(A); *International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union v. Los Angeles Export Terminal, Inc.* (1999) 69 Cal.App.4th 287, 300; *Epstein v. Hollywood Entertainment Dist. II Business Improvement District* (2001) 87 Cal.App.4th 862, 876; see also 85 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 55 (2002)
- 14 *International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union v. Los Angeles Export Terminal* (1999) 69 Cal. App.4th 287, 300 fn. 5
- 15 "The Brown Act, Open Meetings for Local Legislative Bodies," California Attorney General's Office (2003), p. 7
- 16 California Government Code section 54952(d)
- 17 California Government Code section 54952(b); see also *Freedom Newspapers, Inc. v. Orange County Employees Retirement System Board of Directors* (1993) 6 Cal.4th 821, 832.
- 18 *Taxpayers for Livable Communities v. City of Malibu* (2005) 126 Cal.App.4th 1123, 1129
- 19 56 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 14, 16-17 (1973)
- 20 *Wilson v. San Francisco Municipal Railway* (1973) 29 Cal.App.3d 870, 878-879
- 21 *Golightly v. Molina* (2014) 229 Cal.App.4th 1501, 1513
- 22 59 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 162, 164 (1976)

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# Chapter 3

## MEETINGS

Brown Act meetings .....	18
Six exceptions to the meeting definition.....	18
Collective briefings.....	21
Retreats or workshops of legislative bodies.....	21
Serial meetings .....	21
Informal gatherings .....	24
Technological conferencing .....	24
Location of meetings .....	25

# Chapter 3

## MEETINGS



The Brown Act only applies to meetings of local legislative bodies. The Brown Act defines a meeting as: "... and any congregation of a majority of the members of a legislative body at the same time and location, including teleconference location as permitted by Section 54953, to hear, discuss, deliberate, or take any action on any item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body."<sup>1</sup> The term "meeting" is not limited to gatherings at which action is taken but includes deliberative gatherings as well. A hearing before an individual hearing officer is not a meeting under the Brown Act because it is not a hearing before a legislative body.<sup>2</sup>

### Brown Act meetings

Brown Act meetings include a legislative body's regular meetings, special meetings, emergency meetings, and adjourned meetings.

- **"Regular meetings"** are meetings occurring at the dates, times, and location set by resolution, ordinance, or other formal action by the legislative body and are subject to 72-hour posting requirements.<sup>3</sup>
- **"Special meetings"** are meetings called by the presiding officer or majority of the legislative body to discuss only discrete items on the agenda under the Brown Act's notice requirements for special meetings and are subject to 24-hour posting requirements.<sup>4</sup>
- **"Emergency meetings"** are a limited class of meetings held when prompt action is needed due to actual or threatened disruption of public facilities and are held on little notice.<sup>5</sup>
- **"Adjourned meetings"** are regular or special meetings that have been adjourned or re-adjourned to a time and place specified in the order of adjournment, with no agenda required for regular meetings adjourned for less than five calendar days as long as no additional business is transacted.<sup>6</sup>

### Six exceptions to the meeting definition

The Brown Act creates six exceptions to the meeting definition:<sup>7</sup>

#### *Individual Contacts*

The first exception involves individual contacts between a member of the legislative body and any other person. The Brown Act does not limit a legislative body member acting on his or her own. This exception recognizes the right to confer with constituents, advocates, consultants, news reporters, local agency staff, or a colleague.

Individual contacts, however, cannot be used to do in stages what would be prohibited in one step. For example, a series of individual contacts that leads to discussion, deliberation, or action among a majority of the members of a legislative body is prohibited. Such serial meetings are discussed below.

### Conferences

The second exception allows a legislative body majority to attend a conference or similar gathering open to the public that addresses issues of general interest to the public or to public agencies of the type represented by the legislative body.

Among other things, this exception permits legislative body members to attend annual association conferences of city, county, school, community college, and other local agency officials, so long as those meetings are open to the public. However, a majority of members cannot discuss among themselves, other than as part of the scheduled program, business of a specific nature that is within their local agency's subject matter jurisdiction.

### Community Meetings

The third exception allows a legislative body majority to attend an open and publicized meeting held by another organization to address a topic of local community concern. A majority cannot discuss among themselves, other than as part of the scheduled program, business of a specific nature that is within the legislative body's subject matter jurisdiction. Under this exception, a legislative body majority may attend a local service club meeting or a local candidates' night if the meetings are open to the public.



**“I see we have four distinguished members of the city council at our meeting tonight,” said the chair of the Environmental Action Coalition. “I wonder if they have anything to say about the controversy over enacting a slow growth ordinance?”**

*The Brown Act permits a majority of a legislative body to attend and speak at an open and publicized meeting conducted by another organization. The Brown Act may nevertheless be violated if a majority discusses, deliberates, or takes action on an item during the meeting of the other organization. There is a fine line between what is permitted and what is not; hence, members should exercise caution when participating in these types of events.*

- Q.** The local chamber of commerce sponsors an open and public candidate debate during an election campaign. Three of the five agency members are up for re-election and all three participate. All of the candidates are asked their views of a controversial project scheduled for a meeting to occur just after the election. May the three incumbents answer the question?
- A.** Yes, because the Brown Act does not constrain the incumbents from expressing their views regarding important matters facing the local agency as part of the political process the same as any other candidates.



### Other Legislative Bodies

The fourth exception allows a majority of a legislative body to attend an open and publicized meeting of: (1) another body of the local agency; and (2) a legislative body of another local agency.<sup>8</sup> Again, the majority cannot discuss among themselves, other than as part of the scheduled meeting, business of a specific nature that is within their subject matter jurisdiction. This exception allows, for example, a city council or a majority of a board of supervisors to attend a controversial meeting of the planning commission.

Nothing in the Brown Act prevents the majority of a legislative body from sitting together at such a meeting. They may choose not to, however, to preclude any possibility of improperly discussing local agency business and to avoid the appearance of a Brown Act violation. Further, aside

from the Brown Act, there may be other reasons, such as due process considerations, why the members should avoid giving public testimony or trying to influence the outcome of proceedings before a subordinate body.

- Q.** The entire legislative body intends to testify against a bill before the Senate Local Government Committee in Sacramento. Must this activity be noticed as a meeting of the body?
- A.** *No, because the members are attending and participating in an open meeting of another governmental body which the public may attend.*
- Q.** The members then proceed upstairs to the office of their local Assembly member to discuss issues of local interest. Must this session be noticed as a meeting and be open to the public?
- A.** *Yes, because the entire body may not meet behind closed doors except for proper closed sessions. The same answer applies to a private lunch or dinner with the Assembly member.*

### Standing Committees

The fifth exception authorizes the attendance of a majority at an open and noticed meeting of a standing committee of the legislative body, provided that the legislative body members who are not members of the standing committee attend only as observers (meaning that they cannot speak or otherwise participate in the meeting).<sup>9</sup>

- Q.** The legislative body establishes a standing committee of two of its five members, which meets monthly. A third member of the legislative body wants to attend these meetings and participate. May she?
- A.** *She may attend, but only as an observer; she may not participate.*

### Social or Ceremonial Events

The final exception permits a majority of a legislative body to attend a purely social or ceremonial occasion. Once again, a majority cannot discuss business among themselves of a specific nature that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body.

Nothing in the Brown Act prevents a majority of members from attending the same football game, party, wedding, funeral, reception, or farewell. The test is not whether a majority of a legislative body attends the function, but whether business of a specific nature within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body is discussed. So long as no such business is discussed, there is no violation of the Brown Act.

### Grand Jury Testimony

In addition, members of a legislative body, either individually or collectively, may give testimony in private before a grand jury.<sup>10</sup> This is the equivalent of a seventh exception to the Brown Act's definition of a "meeting."

### Collective briefings

None of these exceptions permits a majority of a legislative body to meet together with staff in advance of a meeting for a collective briefing. Any such briefings that involve a majority of the body in the same place and time must be open to the public and satisfy Brown Act meeting notice and agenda requirements.

### Retreats or workshops of legislative bodies

Gatherings by a majority of legislative body members at the legislative body's retreats, study sessions, or workshops are covered under the Brown Act. This is the case whether the retreat, study session, or workshop focuses on long-range agency planning, discussion of critical local issues, or team building and group dynamics.<sup>11</sup>



**Q.** The legislative body wants to hold a team-building session to improve relations among its members. May such a session be conducted behind closed doors?

**A.** *No, this is not a proper subject for a closed session, and there is no other basis to exclude the public. Council relations are a matter of public business.*

### Serial meetings

One of the most frequently asked questions about the Brown Act involves serial meetings. At any one time, such meetings involve only a portion of a legislative body, but eventually involve a majority. The Brown Act provides that "[a] majority of the members of a legislative body shall not, outside a meeting ... use a series of communications of any kind, directly or through intermediaries, to discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item of business that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body."<sup>12</sup> The problem with serial meetings is the process, which deprives the public of an opportunity for meaningful observation of and participation in legislative body decision-making.

The serial meeting may occur by either a “daisy chain” or a “hub and spoke” sequence. In the daisy chain scenario, Member A contacts Member B, Member B contacts Member C, Member C contacts Member D and so on, until a quorum has discussed, deliberated, or taken action on an item within the legislative body’s subject matter jurisdiction. The hub and spoke process involves at least two scenarios. In the first scenario, Member A (the hub) sequentially contacts Members B, C, and D and so on (the spokes), until a quorum has been contacted. In the second scenario, a staff member (the hub), functioning as an intermediary for the legislative body or one of its members,

communicates with a majority of members (the spokes) one-by-one for discussion, deliberation, or a decision on a proposed action.<sup>13</sup> Another example of a serial meeting is when a chief executive officer (the hub) briefs a majority of members (the spokes) prior to a formal meeting and, in the process, information about the members’ respective views is revealed. Each of these scenarios violates the Brown Act.

A legislative body member has the right, if not the duty, to meet with constituents to address their concerns. That member also has the right to confer with a colleague (but not with a majority of the body, counting the member) or appropriate staff about local agency business. An employee or official of a local agency may engage in separate conversations or communications outside of an open and noticed meeting “with members of a legislative body in order to answer questions or provide information regarding a matter that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of

the local agency if that person does not communicate to members of the legislative body the comments or position of any other member or members of the legislative body.”<sup>14</sup>

The Brown Act has been violated, however, if several one-on-one meetings or conferences leads to a discussion, deliberation, or action by a majority. In one case, a violation occurred when a quorum of a city council, by a letter that had been circulated among members outside of a formal meeting, directed staff to take action in an eminent domain proceeding.<sup>15</sup>

A unilateral written communication to the legislative body, such as an informational or advisory memorandum, does not violate the Brown Act.<sup>16</sup> Such a memo, however, may be a public record.<sup>17</sup>

**The phone call was from a lobbyist. “Say, I need your vote for that project in the south area. How about it?”**

**“Well, I don’t know,” replied Board Member Aletto. “That’s kind of a sticky proposition. You sure you need my vote?”**

**“Well, I’ve got Bradley and Cohen lined up and another vote leaning. With you I’d be over the top.”**

**Moments later, the phone rings again. “Hey, I’ve been hearing some rumbles on that south area project,” said the newspaper reporter. “I’m counting noses. How are you voting on it?”**

*Neither the lobbyist nor the reporter has violated the Brown Act, but they are facilitating*



a violation. The board member may have violated the Brown Act by hearing about the positions of other board members and indeed coaxing the lobbyist to reveal the other board members' positions by asking "You sure you need my vote?" The prudent course is to avoid such leading conversations and to caution lobbyists, staff, and news media against revealing such positions of others.

**The mayor sat down across from the city manager. "From now on," he declared, "I want you to provide individual briefings on upcoming agenda items. Some of this material is very technical, and the council members don't want to sound like idiots asking about it in public. Besides that, briefings will speed up the meeting."**

*Agency employees or officials may have separate conversations or communications outside of an open and noticed meeting "with members of a legislative body in order to answer questions or provide information regarding a matter that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the local agency if that person does not communicate to members of the legislative body the comments or position of any other member or members of the legislative body."<sup>18</sup> Members should always be vigilant when discussing local agency business with anyone to avoid conversations that could lead to a discussion, deliberation or action taken among the majority of the legislative body.*

**"Thanks for the information," said Council Member Kim. "These zoning changes can be tricky, and now I think I'm better equipped to make the right decision."**

**"Glad to be of assistance," replied the planning director. "I'm sure Council Member Jones is OK with these changes. How are you leaning?"**

**"Well," said Council Member Kim, "I'm leaning toward approval. I know that two of my colleagues definitely favor approval."**

*The planning director should not disclose Jones' prospective vote, and Kim should not disclose the prospective votes of two of her colleagues. Under these facts, there likely has been a serial meeting in violation of the Brown Act.*

- Q.** The agency's website includes a chat room where agency employees and officials participate anonymously and often discuss issues of local agency business. Members of the legislative body participate regularly. Does this scenario present a potential for violation of the Brown Act?
- A.** Yes, because it is a technological device that may serve to allow for a majority of members to discuss, deliberate, or take action on matters of agency business.
- Q.** A member of a legislative body contacts two other members on a five-member body relative to scheduling a special meeting. Is this an illegal serial meeting?
- A.** No, the Brown Act expressly allows a majority of a body to call a special meeting, though the members should avoid discussing the merits of what is to be taken up at the meeting.

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**PRACTICE TIP:** When briefing legislative body members, staff must exercise care not to disclose other members' views and positions.

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Particular care should be exercised when staff briefings of legislative body members occur by email because of the ease of using the “reply to all” button that may inadvertently result in a Brown Act violation.

### Informal gatherings

Often members are tempted to mix business with pleasure — for example, by holding a post-meeting gathering. Informal gatherings at which local agency business is discussed or transacted violate the law if they are not conducted in conformance with the Brown Act.<sup>19</sup> A luncheon gathering in a crowded dining room violates the Brown Act if the public does not have an opportunity to attend, hear, or participate in the deliberations of members.

**Thursday at 11:30 a.m., as they did every week, the board of directors of the Dry Gulch Irrigation District trooped into Pop’s Donut Shoppe for an hour of talk and fellowship. They sat at the corner window, fronting on Main and Broadway, to show they had nothing to hide. Whenever he could, the managing editor of the weekly newspaper down the street hurried over to join the board.**

*A gathering like this would not violate the Brown Act if board members scrupulously avoided talking about irrigation district issues — which might be difficult. This kind of situation should be avoided. The public is unlikely to believe the board members could meet regularly without discussing public business. A newspaper executive’s presence in no way lessens the potential for a violation of the Brown Act.*

- Q.** The agency has won a major victory in the Supreme Court on an issue of importance. The presiding officer decides to hold an impromptu press conference in order to make a statement to the print and broadcast media. All the other members show up in order to make statements of their own and be seen by the media. Is this gathering illegal?
- A.** *Technically there is no exception for this sort of gathering, but as long as members do not state their intentions as to future action to be taken and the press conference is open to the public, it seems harmless.*



### Technological conferencing

Except for certain nonsubstantive purposes, such as scheduling a special meeting, a conference call including a majority of the members of a legislative body is an unlawful meeting. But, in an effort to keep up with information age technologies, the Brown Act specifically allows a legislative body to use any type of teleconferencing to meet, receive public comment and testimony, deliberate, or conduct a closed session.<sup>20</sup> While the Brown Act contains specific requirements for conducting a teleconference, the decision to use teleconferencing is entirely discretionary with the body. No person has a right under the Brown Act to have a meeting by teleconference.

“Teleconference” is defined as “a meeting of a legislative body, the members of which are in different locations, connected by electronic means, through either

audio or video, or both.”<sup>21</sup> In addition to the specific requirements relating to teleconferencing, the meeting must comply with all provisions of the Brown Act otherwise applicable. The Brown Act contains the following teleconferencing requirements:<sup>22</sup>

- Teleconferencing may be used for all purposes during any meeting;
- At least a quorum of the legislative body must participate from locations within the local agency’s jurisdiction;
- Additional teleconference locations may be made available for the public;
- Each teleconference location must be specifically identified in the notice and agenda of the meeting, including a full address and room number, as may be applicable;
- Agendas must be posted at each teleconference location, even if a hotel room or a residence;
- Each teleconference location, including a hotel room or residence, must be accessible to the public and have technology, such as a speakerphone, to enable the public to participate;
- The agenda must provide the opportunity for the public to address the legislative body directly at each teleconference location; and
- All votes must be by roll call.

**Q.** A member on vacation wants to participate in a meeting of the legislative body and vote by cellular phone from her car while driving from Washington, D.C. to New York. May she?

**A.** *She may not participate or vote because she is not in a noticed and posted teleconference location.*

The use of teleconferencing to conduct a legislative body meeting presents a variety of issues beyond the scope of this guide to discuss in detail. Therefore, before teleconferencing a meeting, legal counsel for the local agency should be consulted.

### Location of meetings

The Brown Act generally requires all regular and special meetings of a legislative body, including retreats and workshops, to be held within the boundaries of the territory over which the local agency exercises jurisdiction.<sup>23</sup>

An open and publicized meeting of a legislative body may be held outside of agency boundaries if the purpose of the meeting is one of the following:<sup>24</sup>

- Comply with state or federal law or a court order, or attend a judicial conference or administrative proceeding in which the local agency is a party;
- Inspect real or personal property that cannot be conveniently brought into the local agency’s territory, provided the meeting is limited to items relating to that real or personal property;

**Q.** The agency is considering approving a major retail mall. The developer has built other similar malls, and invites the entire legislative body to visit a mall outside the jurisdiction. May the entire body go?

**A.** *Yes, the Brown Act permits meetings outside the boundaries of the agency for specified reasons and inspection of property is one such reason. The field trip must be treated as a meeting and the public must be allowed to attend.*

- Participate in multiagency meetings or discussions; however, such meetings must be held within the boundaries of one of the participating agencies, and all of those agencies must give proper notice;
- Meet in the closest meeting facility if the local agency has no meeting facility within its boundaries, or meet at its principal office if that office is located outside the territory over which the agency has jurisdiction;
- Meet with elected or appointed federal or California officials when a local meeting would be impractical, solely to discuss a legislative or regulatory issue affecting the local agency and over which the federal or state officials have jurisdiction;
- Meet in or nearby a facility owned by the agency, provided that the topic of the meeting is limited to items directly related to the facility; or
- Visit the office of its legal counsel for a closed session on pending litigation, when to do so would reduce legal fees or costs.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, the governing board of a school or community college district may hold meetings outside of its boundaries to attend a conference on nonadversarial collective bargaining techniques, interview candidates for school district superintendent, or interview a potential employee from another district.<sup>26</sup> A school board may also interview members of the public residing in another district if the board is considering employing that district's superintendent.

Similarly, meetings of a joint powers authority can occur within the territory of at least one of its member agencies, and a joint powers authority with members throughout the state may meet anywhere in the state.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, if a fire, flood, earthquake, or other emergency makes the usual meeting place unsafe, the presiding officer can designate another meeting place for the duration of the emergency. News media that have requested notice of meetings must be notified of the designation by the most rapid means of communication available.<sup>28</sup>

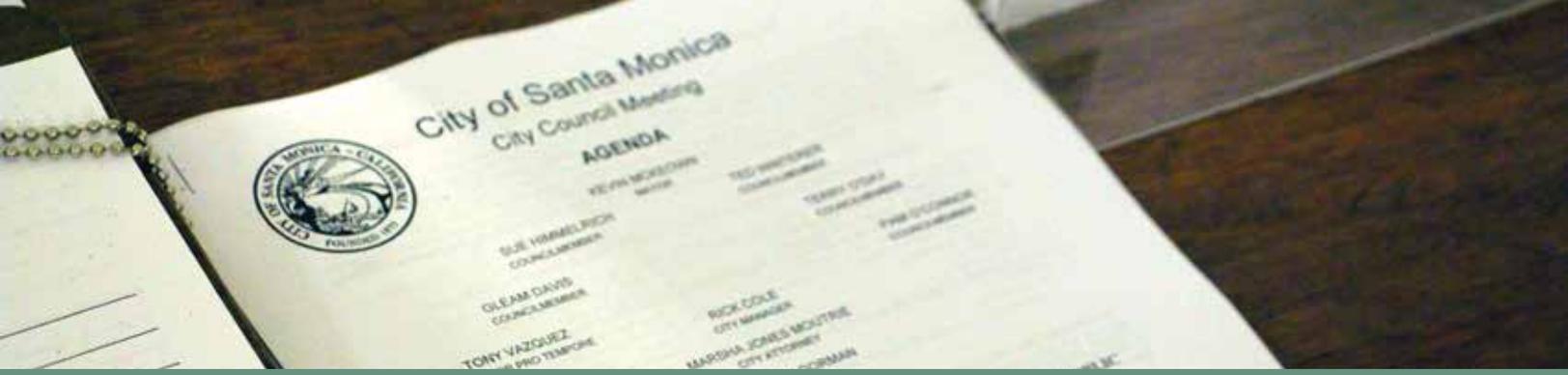


## Endnotes:

- 1 California Government Code section 54952.2(a)
- 2 *Wilson v. San Francisco Municipal Railway* (1973) 29 Cal.App.3d 870
- 3 California Government Code section 54954(a)
- 4 California Government Code section 54956
- 5 California Government Code section 54956.5
- 6 California Government Code section 54955
- 7 California Government Code section 54952.2(c)
- 8 California Government Code section 54952.2(c)(4)
- 9 California Government Code section 54952.2(c)(6)
- 10 California Government Code section 54953.1
- 11 “*The Brown Act*,” California Attorney General (2003), p. 10
- 12 California Government Code section 54952.2(b)(1)
- 13 *Stockton Newspaper Inc. v. Redevelopment Agency* (1985) 171 Cal.App.3d 95
- 14 California Government Code section 54952.2(b)(2)
- 15 *Common Cause v. Stirling* (1983) 147 Cal.App.3d 518
- 16 *Roberts v. City of Palmdale* (1993) 5 Cal.4th 363
- 17 California Government Code section 54957.5(a)
- 18 California Government Code section 54952.2(b)(2)
- 19 California Government Code section 54952.2; 43 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 36 (1964)
- 20 California Government Code section 54953(b)(1)
- 21 California Government Code section 54953(b)(4)
- 22 California Government Code section 54953
- 23 California Government Code section 54954(b)
- 24 California Government Code section 54954(b)(1)-(7)
- 25 94 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 15 (2011)
- 26 California Government Code section 54954(c)
- 27 California Government Code section 54954(d)
- 28 California Government Code section 54954(e)

Updates to this publication responding to changes in the Brown Act or new court interpretations are available at [www.cacities.org/opengovernment](http://www.cacities.org/opengovernment). A current version of the Brown Act may be found at [www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov).





# Chapter 4

## AGENDAS, NOTICES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Agendas for regular meetings .....	30
Mailed agenda upon written request .....	31
Notice requirements for special meetings .....	32
Notices and agendas for adjourned and continued meetings and hearings .....	32
Notice requirements for emergency meetings .....	32
Notice of compensation for simultaneous or serial meetings .....	33
Educational agency meetings .....	33
Notice requirements for tax or assessment meetings and hearings .....	33
Non-agenda items .....	34
Responding to the public .....	34
The right to attend and observe meetings .....	35
Records and recordings .....	36
The public's place on the agenda .....	37

# Chapter 4

## AGENDAS, NOTICES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Effective notice is essential for an open and public meeting. Whether a meeting is open or how the public may participate in that meeting is academic if nobody knows about the meeting.

### Agendas for regular meetings

Every regular meeting of a legislative body of a local agency — including advisory committees, commissions, or boards, as well as standing committees of legislative bodies — must be preceded by a posted agenda that advises the public of the meeting and the matters to be transacted or discussed.

The agenda must be posted at least 72 hours before the regular meeting in a location “freely accessible to members of the public.”<sup>1</sup> The courts have not definitively interpreted the “freely accessible” requirement. The California Attorney General has interpreted this

provision to require posting in a location accessible to the public 24 hours a day during the 72-hour period, but any of the 72 hours may fall on a weekend.<sup>2</sup> This provision may be satisfied by posting on a touch screen electronic kiosk accessible without charge to the public 24 hours a day during the 72-hour period.<sup>3</sup> While posting an agenda on an agency’s Internet website will not, by itself, satisfy the “freely accessible” requirement since there is no universal access to the internet, an agency has a supplemental obligation to post the agenda on its website if: (1) the local agency has a website; and (2) the legislative body whose meeting is the subject of the agenda is either (a) a governing body, or (b) has members that are compensated, with one or more members that are also members of a governing body.<sup>4</sup>

**Q.** May the meeting of a governing body go forward if its agenda was either inadvertently not posted on the city’s website or if the website was not operational during part or all of the 72-hour period preceding the meeting?

**A.** *At a minimum, the Brown Act calls for “substantial compliance” with all agenda posting requirements, including posting to the agency website.<sup>5</sup> Should website technical difficulties arise, seek a legal opinion from your agency attorney. The California Attorney General has opined that technical difficulties which cause the website agenda to become inaccessible for a portion of the 72 hours preceding a meeting do not automatically or inevitably lead to a Brown Act violation, provided the agency can demonstrate substantial compliance.<sup>6</sup> This inquiry requires a fact-specific examination of whether the agency or its legislative body made “reasonably effective efforts to notify interested persons of a public meeting” through online posting and other available means.<sup>7</sup> The Attorney General’s opinion suggests that this examination would include an evaluation of how long a technical problem persisted, the efforts made to correct the problem or otherwise ensure that the public was informed, and the actual effect the problem had on public*

*awareness, among other factors.<sup>8</sup> The City Attorneys' Department has taken the position that obvious website technical difficulties do not require cancellation of a meeting, provided that the agency meets all other Brown Act posting requirements and the agenda is available on the website once the technical difficulties are resolved.*

The agenda must state the meeting time and place and must contain “a brief general description of each item of business to be transacted or discussed at the meeting, including items to be discussed in closed session.”<sup>9</sup> Special care should be taken to describe on the agenda each distinct action to be taken by the legislative body, and avoid overbroad descriptions of a “project” if the “project” is actually a set of distinct actions that must each be separately listed on the agenda.<sup>10</sup>

**PRACTICE TIP:** Putting together a meeting agenda requires careful thought.

**Q.** The agenda for a regular meeting contains the following items of business:

- Consideration of a report regarding traffic on Eighth Street; and
- Consideration of contract with ABC Consulting.

Are these descriptions adequate?

**A.** *If the first is, it is barely adequate. A better description would provide the reader with some idea of what the report is about and what is being recommended. The second is not adequate. A better description might read “consideration of a contract with ABC Consulting in the amount of \$50,000 for traffic engineering services regarding traffic on Eighth Street.”*

**Q.** The agenda includes an item entitled City Manager’s Report, during which time the city manager provides a brief report on notable topics of interest, none of which are listed on the agenda.

Is this permissible?

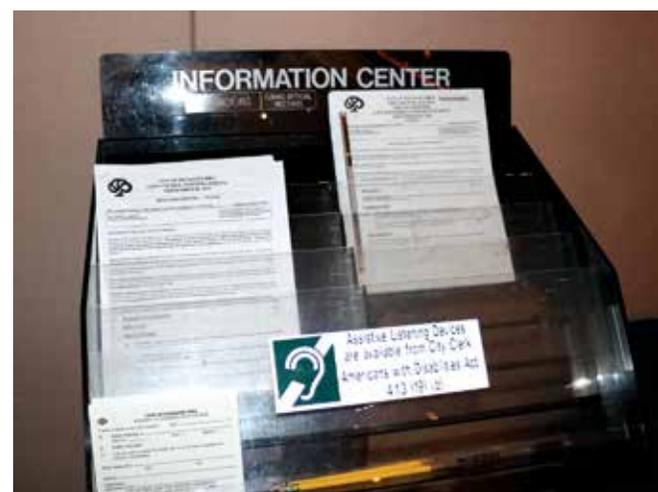
**A.** *Yes, so long as it does not result in extended discussion or action by the body.*

A brief general description may not be sufficient for closed session agenda items. The Brown Act provides safe harbor language for the various types of permissible closed sessions. Substantial compliance with the safe harbor language is recommended to protect legislative bodies and elected officials from legal challenges.

### **Mailed agenda upon written request**

The legislative body, or its designee, must mail a copy of the agenda or, if requested, the entire agenda packet, to any person who has filed a written request for such materials. These copies shall be mailed at the time the agenda is posted. If requested, these materials must be made available in appropriate alternative formats to persons with disabilities.

A request for notice is valid for one calendar year and renewal requests must be filed following January 1 of each year. The legislative body may establish a fee to recover the cost of providing the service. Failure of the requesting person to receive the agenda does not constitute grounds for invalidation of actions taken at the meeting.<sup>11</sup>



### Notice requirements for special meetings

There is no express agenda requirement for special meetings, but the notice of the special meeting effectively serves as the agenda and limits the business that may be transacted or discussed.

Written notice must be sent to each member of the legislative body (unless waived in writing by that member) and to each local newspaper of general circulation, and radio or television station that has requested such notice in writing. This notice must be delivered by personal delivery or any other means that ensures receipt, at least 24 hours before the time of the meeting.

The notice must state the time and place of the meeting, as well as all business to be transacted or discussed. It is recommended that the business to be transacted or discussed be described in the same manner that an item for a regular meeting would be described on the agenda — with a brief general description. As noted above, closed session items should be described in accordance with the Brown Act's safe harbor provisions to protect legislative bodies and elected officials from challenges of noncompliance with notice requirements.

The special meeting notice must also be posted at least 24 hours prior to the special meeting using the same methods as posting an agenda for a regular meeting: (1) at a site that is freely accessible to the public, and (2) on the agency's website if: (1) the local agency has a website; and (2) the legislative body whose meeting is the subject of the agenda is either (a) a governing body, or (b) has members that are compensated, with one or more members that are also members of a governing body.<sup>12</sup>

### Notices and agendas for adjourned and continued meetings and hearings

A regular or special meeting can be adjourned and re-adjourned to a time and place specified in the order of adjournment.<sup>13</sup> If no time is stated, the meeting is continued to the hour for regular meetings. Whoever is present (even if they are less than a quorum) may so adjourn a meeting; if no member of the legislative body is present, the clerk or secretary may adjourn the meeting. If a meeting is adjourned for less than five calendar days, no new agenda need be posted so long as a new item of business is not introduced.<sup>14</sup> A copy of the order of adjournment must be posted within 24 hours after the adjournment, at or near the door of the place where the meeting was held.

A hearing can be continued to a subsequent meeting. The process is the same as for continuing adjourned meetings, except that if the hearing is continued to a time less than 24 hours away, a copy of the order or notice of continuance must be posted immediately following the meeting.<sup>15</sup>

### Notice requirements for emergency meetings

The special meeting notice provisions apply to emergency meetings, except for the 24-hour notice.<sup>16</sup> News media that have requested written notice of special meetings must be notified by telephone at least one hour in advance of an emergency meeting, and all telephone numbers provided in that written request must be tried. If telephones are not working, the notice requirements are deemed waived. However, the news media must be notified as soon as possible of the meeting and any action taken.



News media may make a practice of having written requests on file for notification of special or emergency meetings. Absent such a request, a local agency has no legal obligation to notify news media of special or emergency meetings — although notification may be advisable in any event to avoid controversy.

### **Notice of compensation for simultaneous or serial meetings**

A legislative body that has convened a meeting and whose membership constitutes a quorum of another legislative body, may convene a simultaneous or serial meeting of the other legislative body only after a clerk or member of the convened legislative body orally announces: (1) the amount of compensation or stipend, if any, that each member will be entitled to receive as a result of convening the meeting of the other legislative body; and (2) that the compensation or stipend is provided as a result of convening the meeting of that body.<sup>17</sup>

No oral disclosure of the amount of the compensation is required if the entire amount of such compensation is prescribed by statute and no additional compensation has been authorized by the local agency. Further, no disclosure is required with respect to reimbursements for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of the member's official duties, such as for travel, meals, and lodging.

### **Educational agency meetings**

The Education Code contains some special agenda and special meeting provisions.<sup>18</sup> However, they are generally consistent with the Brown Act. An item is probably void if not posted.<sup>19</sup> A school district board must also adopt regulations to make sure the public can place matters affecting the district's business on meeting agendas and to address the board on those items.<sup>20</sup>

### **Notice requirements for tax or assessment meetings and hearings**

The Brown Act prescribes specific procedures for adoption by a city, county, special district, or joint powers authority of any new or increased tax or assessment imposed on businesses.<sup>21</sup> Though written broadly, these Brown Act provisions do not apply to new or increased real property taxes or assessments as those are governed by the California Constitution, Article XIII C or XIII D, enacted by Proposition 218. At least one public meeting must be held to allow public testimony on the tax or assessment. In addition, there must also be at least 45 days notice of a public hearing at which the legislative body proposes to enact or increase the tax or assessment. Notice of the public meeting and public hearing must be provided at the same time and in the same document. The public notice relating to general taxes must be provided by newspaper publication. The public notice relating to new or increased business assessments must be provided through a mailing to all business owners proposed to be subject to the new or increased assessment. The agency may recover the reasonable costs of the public meetings, hearings, and notice.

The Brown Act exempts certain fees, standby or availability charges, recurring assessments, and new or increased assessments that are subject to the notice and hearing requirements of the Constitution.<sup>22</sup> As a practical matter, the Constitution's notice requirements have preempted this section of the Brown Act.



### Non-agenda items

The Brown Act generally prohibits any action or discussion of items not on the posted agenda. However, there are three specific situations in which a legislative body can act on an item not on the agenda:<sup>23</sup>

- When a majority decides there is an “emergency situation” (as defined for emergency meetings);
- When two-thirds of the members present (or all members if less than two-thirds are present) determine there is a need for immediate action and the need to take action “came to the attention of the local agency subsequent to the agenda being posted.” This exception requires a degree of urgency. Further, an item cannot be considered under this provision if the legislative body or the staff knew about the need to take immediate action before the agenda was posted. A new need does not arise because staff forgot to put an item on the agenda or because an applicant missed a deadline; or
- When an item appeared on the agenda of, and was continued from, a meeting held not more than five days earlier.

The exceptions are narrow, as indicated by this list. The first two require a specific determination by the legislative body. That determination can be challenged in court and, if unsubstantiated, can lead to invalidation of an action.

**“I’d like a two-thirds vote of the board, so we can go ahead and authorize commencement of phase two of the East Area Project,” said Chair Lopez.**

**“It’s not on the agenda. But we learned two days ago that we finished phase one ahead of schedule — believe it or not — and I’d like to keep it that way. Do I hear a motion?”**

*The desire to stay ahead of schedule generally would not satisfy “a need for immediate action.” Too casual an action could invite a court challenge by a disgruntled resident. The prudent course is to place an item on the agenda for the next meeting and not risk invalidation.*

**“We learned this morning of an opportunity for a state grant,” said the chief engineer at the regular board meeting, “but our application has to be submitted in two days. We’d like the board to give us the go ahead tonight, even though it’s not on the agenda.”**

*A legitimate immediate need can be acted upon even though not on the posted agenda by following a two-step process:*

- First, make two determinations: 1) that there is an immediate need to take action, and 2) that the need arose after the posting of the agenda. The matter is then placed on the agenda.
- Second, discuss and act on the added agenda item.

### Responding to the public

The public can talk about anything within the jurisdiction of the legislative body, but the legislative body generally cannot act on or discuss an item not on the agenda. What happens when a member of the public raises a subject not on the agenda?

**PRACTICE TIP:** Subject to very limited exceptions, the Brown Act prohibits any action or discussion of an item not on the posted agenda.

While the Brown Act does not allow discussion or action on items not on the agenda, it does allow members of the legislative body, or its staff, to “briefly respond” to comments or questions from members of the public, provide a reference to staff or other resources for factual information, or direct staff to place the issue on a future agenda. In addition, even without a comment from the public, a legislative body member or a staff member may ask for information, request a report back, request to place a matter on the agenda for a subsequent meeting (subject to the body’s rules or procedures), ask a question for clarification, make a brief announcement, or briefly report on his or her own activities.<sup>24</sup> However, caution should be used to avoid any discussion or action on such items.



**Council Member Jefferson: I would like staff to respond to Resident Joe’s complaints during public comment about the repaving project on Elm Street — are there problems with this project?**

**City Manager Frank: The public works director has prepared a 45-minute power point presentation for you on the status of this project and will give it right now.**

**Council Member Brown: Take all the time you need; we need to get to the bottom of this. Our residents are unhappy.**

*It is clear from this dialogue that the Elm Street project was not on the council’s agenda, but was raised during the public comment period for items not on the agenda. Council Member A properly asked staff to respond; the city manager should have given at most a brief response. If a lengthy report from the public works director was warranted, the city manager should have stated that it would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. Otherwise, both the long report and the likely discussion afterward will improperly embroil the council in a matter that is not listed on the agenda.*

## **The right to attend and observe meetings**

A number of Brown Act provisions protect the public’s right to attend, observe, and participate in meetings.

Members of the public cannot be required to register their names, provide other information, complete a questionnaire, or otherwise “fulfill any condition precedent” to attending a meeting. Any attendance list, questionnaire, or similar document posted at or near the entrance to the meeting room or circulated at a meeting must clearly state that its completion is voluntary and that all persons may attend whether or not they fill it out.<sup>25</sup>

No meeting can be held in a facility that prohibits attendance based on race, religion, color, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, sex, sexual orientation, or disability, or that is inaccessible to the disabled. Nor can a meeting be held where the public must make a payment or purchase in order to be present.<sup>26</sup> This does not mean, however, that the public is entitled to free entry to a conference attended by a majority of the legislative body.<sup>27</sup>

While a legislative body may use teleconferencing in connection with a meeting, the public must be given notice of and access to the teleconference location. Members of the public must be able to address the legislative body from the teleconference location.<sup>28</sup>

Action by secret ballot, whether preliminary or final, is flatly prohibited.<sup>29</sup>

All actions taken by the legislative body in open session, and the vote of each member thereon, must be disclosed to the public at the time the action is taken.<sup>30</sup>

**Q:** The agenda calls for election of the legislative body's officers. Members of the legislative body want to cast unsigned written ballots that would be tallied by the clerk, who would announce the results. Is this voting process permissible?

**A:** *No. The possibility that a public vote might cause hurt feelings among members of the legislative body or might be awkward — or even counterproductive — does not justify a secret ballot.*

The legislative body may remove persons from a meeting who willfully interrupt proceedings.<sup>31</sup> Ejection is justified only when audience members actually disrupt the proceedings.<sup>32</sup> If order cannot be restored after ejecting disruptive persons, the meeting room may be cleared. Members of the news media who have not participated in the disturbance must be allowed to continue to attend the meeting. The legislative body may establish a procedure to re-admit an individual or individuals not responsible for the disturbance.<sup>33</sup>

### Records and recordings

The public has the right to review agendas and other writings distributed by any person to a majority of the legislative body in connection with a matter subject to discussion or consideration at a meeting. Except for privileged documents, those materials are public records and must be made available upon request without delay.<sup>34</sup> A fee or deposit as permitted by the California Public Records Act may be charged for a copy of a public record.<sup>35</sup>

**Q:** In connection with an upcoming hearing on a discretionary use permit, counsel for the legislative body transmits a memorandum to all members of the body outlining the litigation risks in granting or denying the permit. Must this memorandum be included in the packet of agenda materials available to the public?

**A:** *No. The memorandum is a privileged attorney-client communication.*

**Q:** In connection with an agenda item calling for the legislative body to approve a contract, staff submits to all members of the body a financial analysis explaining why the terms of the contract favor the local agency. Must this memorandum be included in the packet of agenda materials available to the public?

**A:** *Yes. The memorandum has been distributed to the majority of the legislative body, relates to the subject matter of a meeting, and is not a privileged communication.*



A legislative body may discuss or act on some matters without considering written materials. But if writings are distributed to a majority of a legislative body in connection with an agenda item, they must also be available to the public. A non-exempt or otherwise privileged writing distributed to a majority of the legislative body less than 72 hours before the meeting must be made available for inspection at the time of distribution at a public office or location designated for that purpose; and the agendas for all meetings of the legislative body must include the address of this office or location.<sup>36</sup> A writing distributed during a meeting must be made public:

- At the meeting if prepared by the local agency or a member of its legislative body; or
- After the meeting if prepared by some other person.<sup>37</sup>

Any tape or film record of an open and public meeting made for whatever purpose by or at the direction of the local agency is subject to the California Public Records Act; however, it may be erased or destroyed 30 days after the taping or recording. Any inspection of a video or tape recording is to be provided without charge on a video or tape player made available by the local agency.<sup>38</sup> The agency may impose its ordinary charge for copies that is consistent with the California Public Records Act.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, the public is specifically allowed to use audio or video tape recorders or still or motion picture cameras at a meeting to record the proceedings, absent a reasonable finding by the legislative body that noise, illumination, or obstruction of view caused by recorders or cameras would persistently disrupt the proceedings.<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, a legislative body cannot prohibit or restrict the public broadcast of its open and public meetings without making a reasonable finding that the noise, illumination, or obstruction of view would persistently disrupt the proceedings.<sup>41</sup>

### The public's place on the agenda

Every agenda for a regular meeting must allow members of the public to speak on any item of interest, so long as the item is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body. Further, the public must be allowed to speak on a specific item of business before or during the legislative body's consideration of it.<sup>42</sup>

**Q.** Must the legislative body allow members of the public to show videos or make a power point presentation during the public comment part of the agenda, as long as the subject matter is relevant to the agency and is within the established time limit?

**A.** *Probably, although the agency is under no obligation to provide equipment.*

Moreover, the legislative body cannot prohibit public criticism of policies, procedures, programs, or services of the agency or the acts or omissions of the legislative body itself. But the Brown Act provides no immunity for defamatory statements.<sup>43</sup>



**PRACTICE TIP:** Public speakers cannot be compelled to give their name or address as a condition of speaking. The clerk or presiding officer may request speakers to complete a speaker card or identify themselves for the record, but must respect a speaker's desire for anonymity.

**Q.** May the presiding officer prohibit a member of the audience from publicly criticizing an agency employee by name during public comments?

**A.** *No, as long as the criticism pertains to job performance.*

**Q.** During the public comment period of a regular meeting of the legislative body, a resident urges the public to support and vote for a candidate vying for election to the body. May the presiding officer gavel the speaker out of order for engaging in political campaign speech?

**A.** *There is no case law on this subject. Some would argue that campaign issues are outside the subject matter jurisdiction of the body within the meaning of Section 54954.3(a). Others take the view that the speech must be allowed under paragraph (c) of that section because it is relevant to the governing of the agency and an implicit criticism of the incumbents.*



The legislative body may adopt reasonable regulations, including time limits, on public comments. Such regulations should be enforced fairly and without regard to speakers' viewpoints. The legislative body has discretion to modify its regulations regarding time limits on public comment if necessary. For example, the time limit could be shortened to accommodate a lengthy agenda or lengthened to allow additional time for discussion on a complicated matter.<sup>44</sup>

The public does not need to be given an opportunity to speak on an item that has already been considered by a committee made up exclusively of members of the legislative body at a public meeting, if all interested members of the public had the opportunity to speak on the item before or during its consideration, and if the item has not been substantially changed.<sup>45</sup>

Notices and agendas for special meetings must also give members of the public the opportunity to speak before or during consideration of an item on the agenda but need not allow members of the public an opportunity to speak on other matters within the jurisdiction of the legislative body.<sup>46</sup>

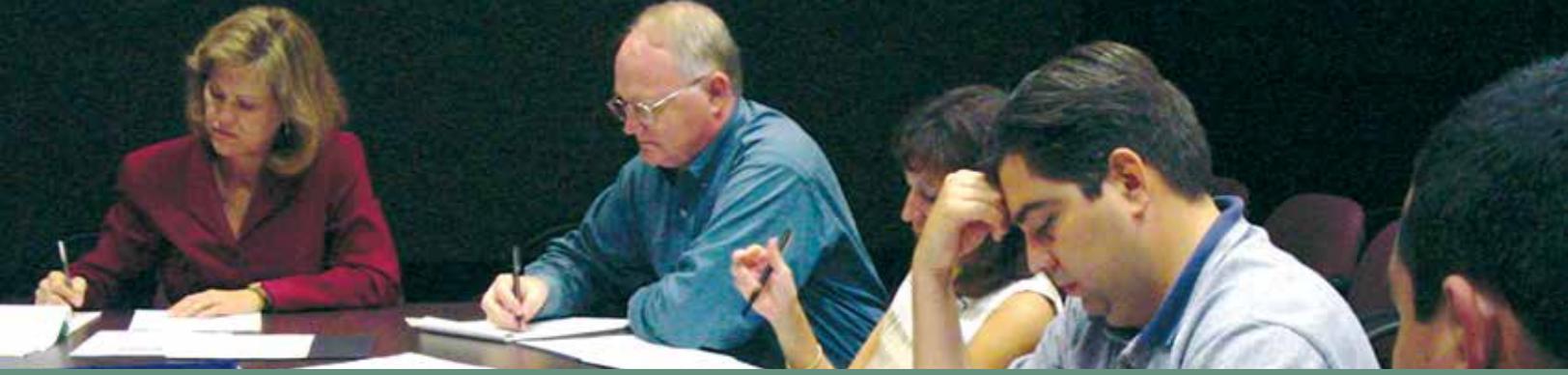
### Endnotes:

- 1 California Government Code section 54954.2(a)(1)
- 2 78 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 327 (1995)
- 3 88 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 218 (2005)
- 4 California Government Code sections 54954.2(a)(1) and 54954.2(d)
- 5 California Government Code section 54960.1(d)(1)
- 6 \_\_\_ Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen.\_\_\_, No. 14-1204 (January 19, 2016) 16 Cal. Daily Op. Serv. 937 (Cal.A.G.), 2016 WL 375262
- 7 *North Pacific LLC v. California Coastal Commission* (2008) 166 Cal.App.4th 1416, 1432
- 8 \_\_\_ Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen.\_\_\_, No. 14-1204 (January 19, 2016) 16 Cal. Daily Op. Serv. 937 (Cal.A.G.), 2016 WL 375262, Slip Op. at p. 8
- 9 California Government Code section 54954.2(a)(1)
- 10 *San Joaquin Raptor Rescue v. County of Merced* (2013) 216 Cal.App.4th 1167 (legislative body's approval of CEQA action (mitigated negative declaration) without specifically listing it on the agenda violates Brown Act, even if the agenda generally describes the development project that is the subject of the CEQA analysis.)

- 11 California Government Code section 54954.1
- 12 California Government Code sections 54956(a) and (c)
- 13 California Government Code section 54955
- 14 California Government Code section 54954.2(b)(3)
- 15 California Government Code section 54955.1
- 16 California Government Code section 54956.5
- 17 California Government Code section 54952.3
- 18 Education Code sections 35144, 35145 and 72129
- 19 *Carlson v. Paradise Unified School District* (1971) 18 Cal.App.3d 196
- 20 California Education Code section 35145.5
- 21 California Government Code section 54954.6
- 22 See Cal.Const.Art.XIIIC, XIIID and California Government Code section 54954.6(h)
- 23 California Government Code section 54954.2(b)
- 24 California Government Code section 54954.2(a)(2)
- 25 California Government Code section 54953.3
- 26 California Government Code section 54961(a); California Government Code section 11135(a)
- 27 California Government Code section 54952.2(c)(2)
- 28 California Government Code section 54953(b)
- 29 California Government Code section 54953(c)
- 30 California Government Code section 54953(c)(2)
- 31 California Government Code section 54957.9.
- 32 *Norse v. City of Santa Cruz* (9th Cir. 2010) 629 F.3d 966 (silent and momentary Nazi salute directed towards mayor is not a disruption); *Acosta v. City of Costa Mesa* (9th Cir. 2013) 718 F.3d 800 (city council may not prohibit “insolent” remarks by members of the public absent actual disruption).
- 33 California Government Code section 54957.9
- 34 California Government Code section 54957.5
- 35 California Government Code section 54957.5(d)
- 36 California Government Code section 54957.5(b)
- 37 California Government Code section 54957.5(c)
- 38 California Government Code section 54953.5(b)
- 39 California Government Code section 54957.5(d)
- 40 California Government Code section 54953.5(a)
- 41 California Government Code section 54953.6
- 42 California Government Code section 54954.3(a)
- 43 California Government Code section 54954.3(c)
- 44 California Government Code section 54954.3(b); *Chaffee v. San Francisco Public Library Com.* (2005) 134 Cal.App.4th 109; 75 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 89 (1992)
- 45 California Government Code section 54954.3(a)
- 46 California Government Code section 54954.3(a)

Updates to this publication responding to changes in the Brown Act or new court interpretations are available at [www.cacities.org/opengovernment](http://www.cacities.org/opengovernment). A current version of the Brown Act may be found at [www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov).





# Chapter 5

## CLOSED SESSIONS

Agendas and reports.....	42
Litigation.....	43
Real estate negotiations .....	45
Public employment .....	46
Labor negotiations .....	47
Labor negotiations — school and community college districts.....	48
Other Education Code exceptions.....	48
Joint Powers Authorities.....	48
License applicants with criminal records.....	49
Public security.....	49
Multijurisdictional law enforcement agency .....	49
Hospital peer review and trade secrets .....	49
Other legislative bases for closed session .....	50
Who may attend closed sessions .....	50
The confidentiality of closed session discussions.....	50

# Chapter 5

## CLOSED SESSIONS

A closed session is a meeting of a legislative body conducted in private without the attendance of the public or press. A legislative body is authorized to meet in closed session only to the extent expressly authorized by the Brown Act.<sup>1</sup>



As summarized in Chapter 1 of this Guide, it is clear that the Brown Act must be interpreted liberally in favor of open meetings, and exceptions that limit public access (including the exceptions for closed session meetings) must be narrowly construed.<sup>2</sup> The most common purposes of the closed session provisions in the Brown Act are to avoid revealing confidential information (e.g., prejudicing the city's position in litigation or compromising the privacy interests of employees). Closed sessions should be conducted keeping those narrow purposes in mind. It is not enough that a subject is sensitive, embarrassing, or controversial. Without specific authority in the Brown Act for a closed session, a matter to be considered by a legislative body must be discussed in public. As an example, a board of police commissioners cannot meet in closed session to provide general policy guidance to a police chief, even though some matters are sensitive and the commission considers their disclosure contrary to the public interest.<sup>3</sup>

**PRACTICE TIP:** Some problems over closed sessions arise because secrecy itself breeds distrust. The Brown Act does not require closed sessions and legislative bodies may do well to resist the tendency to call a closed session simply because it may be permitted. A better practice is to go into closed session only when necessary.

In this chapter, the grounds for convening a closed session are called “exceptions” because they are exceptions to the general rule that meetings must be conducted openly. In some circumstances, none of the closed session exceptions apply to an issue or information the legislative body wishes to discuss privately. In these cases, it is not proper to convene a closed session, even to protect confidential information. For example, although the Brown Act does authorize closed sessions related to specified types of contracts (e.g., specified provisions of real property agreements, employee labor agreements, and litigation settlement agreements),<sup>4</sup> the Brown Act does not authorize closed sessions for other contract negotiations.

### Agendas and reports

Closed session items must be briefly described on the posted agenda and the description must state the specific statutory exemption.<sup>5</sup> An item that appears on the open meeting portion of the agenda may not be taken into closed session until it has been properly agendized as a closed session item or unless it is properly added as a closed session item by a two-thirds vote of the body after making the appropriate urgency findings.<sup>6</sup>

The Brown Act supplies a series of fill in the blank sample agenda descriptions for various types of authorized closed sessions, which provide a “safe harbor” from legal attacks. These sample

agenda descriptions cover license and permit determinations, real property negotiations, existing or anticipated litigation, liability claims, threats to security, public employee appointments, evaluations and discipline, labor negotiations, multi-jurisdictional law enforcement cases, hospital boards of directors, medical quality assurance committees, joint powers agencies, and audits by the California State Auditor's Office.<sup>7</sup>

If the legislative body intends to convene in closed session, it must include the section of the Brown Act authorizing the closed session in advance on the agenda and it must make a public announcement prior to the closed session discussion. In most cases, the announcement may simply be a reference to the agenda item.<sup>8</sup>

Following a closed session, the legislative body must provide an oral or written report on certain actions taken and the vote of every elected member present. The timing and content of the report varies according to the reason for the closed session and the action taken.<sup>9</sup> The announcements may be made at the site of the closed session, so long as the public is allowed to be present to hear them.

If there is a standing or written request for documentation, any copies of contracts, settlement agreements, or other documents finally approved or adopted in closed session must be provided to the requestor(s) after the closed session, if final approval of such documents does not rest with any other party to the contract or settlement. If substantive amendments to a contract or settlement agreement approved by all parties requires retyping, such documents may be held until retyping is completed during normal business hours, but the substance of the changes must be summarized for any person inquiring about them.<sup>10</sup>

The Brown Act does not require minutes, including minutes of closed sessions. However, a legislative body may adopt an ordinance or resolution to authorize a confidential "minute book" be kept to record actions taken at closed sessions.<sup>11</sup> If one is kept, it must be made available to members of the legislative body, provided that the member asking to review minutes of a particular meeting was not disqualified from attending the meeting due to a conflict of interest.<sup>12</sup> A court may order the disclosure of minute books for the court's review if a lawsuit makes sufficient claims of an open meeting violation.

## Litigation

There is an attorney/client relationship, and legal counsel may use it to protect the confidentiality of privileged written and oral communications to members of the legislative body — outside of meetings. But protection of the attorney/client privilege cannot by itself be the reason for a closed session.<sup>13</sup>

The Brown Act expressly authorizes closed sessions to discuss what is considered pending litigation. The rules that apply to holding a litigation closed session involve complex, technical definitions and procedures. The essential thing to know is that a closed session can be held by the body to confer with, or receive advice from, its legal counsel when open discussion would prejudice the position of the local agency in litigation in which the agency is, or could become, a party.<sup>14</sup> The litigation exception under the Brown Act is narrowly construed and does not permit activities beyond a legislative body's conferring with its own legal counsel and required support staff.<sup>15</sup> For example, it is not permissible to hold a closed session in which settlement negotiations take place between a legislative body, a representative of an adverse party, and a mediator.<sup>16</sup>

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**PRACTICE TIP:** Pay close attention to closed session agenda descriptions. Using the wrong label can lead to invalidation of an action taken in closed session if not substantially compliant.

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The California Attorney General has opined that if the agency's attorney is not a participant, a litigation closed session cannot be held.<sup>17</sup> In any event, local agency officials should always consult the agency's attorney before placing this type of closed session on the agenda in order to be certain that it is being done properly.

Before holding a closed session under the pending litigation exception, the legislative body must publicly state the basis for the closed session by identifying one of the following three types of matters: existing litigation, anticipated exposure to litigation, or anticipated initiation of litigation.<sup>18</sup>

**Existing litigation**

**Q.** May the legislative body agree to settle a lawsuit in a properly-noticed closed session, without placing the settlement agreement on an open session agenda for public approval?

**A.** Yes, but the settlement agreement is a public document and must be disclosed on request. Furthermore, a settlement agreement cannot commit the agency to matters that are required to have public hearings.

Existing litigation includes any adjudicatory proceedings before a court, administrative body exercising its adjudicatory authority, hearing officer, or arbitrator. The clearest situation in which a closed session is authorized is when the local agency meets with its legal counsel to discuss a pending matter that has been filed in a court or with an administrative agency and names the local



agency as a party. The legislative body may meet under these circumstances to receive updates on the case from attorneys, participate in developing strategy as the case develops, or consider alternatives for resolution of the case. Generally, an agreement to settle litigation may be approved in closed session. However, an agreement to settle litigation cannot be approved in closed session if it commits the city to take an action that is required to have a public hearing.<sup>19</sup>

**Anticipated exposure to litigation against the local agency**

Closed sessions are authorized for legal counsel to inform the legislative body of a significant exposure to litigation against the local agency, but only if based on "existing facts and circumstances" as defined by the Brown Act.<sup>20</sup> The legislative body may also meet under this exception to determine whether a closed session is authorized based on information provided by legal counsel or staff. In general, the "existing facts and

circumstances" must be publicly disclosed unless they are privileged written communications or not yet known to a potential plaintiff.

**Anticipated initiation of litigation by the local agency**

A closed session may be held under the exception for the anticipated initiation of litigation when the legislative body seeks legal advice on whether to protect the agency's rights and interests by initiating litigation.

Certain actions must be reported in open session at the same meeting following the closed

session. Other actions, as where final approval rests with another party or the court, may be announced when they become final and upon inquiry of any person.<sup>21</sup> Each agency attorney should be aware of and make the disclosures that are required by the particular circumstances.

### Real estate negotiations

A legislative body may meet in closed session with its negotiator to discuss the purchase, sale, exchange, or lease of real property by or for the local agency. A “lease” includes a lease renewal or renegotiation. The purpose is to grant authority to the legislative body’s negotiator on price and terms of payment.<sup>22</sup> Caution should be exercised to limit discussion to price and terms of payment without straying to other related issues such as site design, architecture, or other aspects of the project for which the transaction is contemplated.<sup>23</sup>



**Q.** May other terms of a real estate transaction, aside from price and terms of payment, be addressed in closed session?

**A.** *No. However, there are differing opinions over the scope of the phrase “price and terms of payment” in connection with real estate closed sessions. Many agency attorneys argue that any term that directly affects the economic value of the transaction falls within the ambit of “price and terms of payment.” Others take a narrower, more literal view of the phrase.*

The agency’s negotiator may be a member of the legislative body itself. Prior to the closed session, or on the agenda, the legislative body must identify its negotiators, the real property that the negotiations may concern<sup>24</sup> and the names of the parties with whom its negotiator may negotiate.<sup>25</sup>

After real estate negotiations are concluded, the approval and substance of the agreement must be publicly reported. If its own approval makes the agreement final, the body must report in open session at the public meeting during which the closed session is held. If final approval rests with another party, the local agency must report the approval and the substance of the agreement upon inquiry by any person, as soon as the agency is informed of it.<sup>26</sup>

**“Our population is exploding, and we have to think about new school sites,” said Board Member Jefferson.**

**“Not only that,” interjected Board Member Tanaka, “we need to get rid of a couple of our older facilities.”**

**“Well, obviously the place to do that is in a closed session,” said Board Member O’Reilly. “Otherwise we’re going to set off land speculation. And if we even mention closing a school, parents are going to be in an uproar.”**

*A closed session to discuss potential sites is not authorized by the Brown Act. The exception is limited to meeting with its negotiator over specific sites — which must be identified at an open and public meeting.*

**PRACTICE TIP:** Discussions of who to appoint to an advisory body and whether or not to censure a fellow member of the legislative body must be held in the open.

### Public employment

The Brown Act authorizes a closed session “to consider the appointment, employment, evaluation of performance, discipline, or dismissal of a public employee or to hear complaints or charges brought against the employee.”<sup>27</sup> The purpose of this exception — commonly referred to as the “personnel exception” — is to avoid undue publicity or embarrassment for an employee or applicant for employment and to allow full and candid discussion by the legislative body; thus, it is restricted to discussing individuals, not general personnel policies.<sup>28</sup> The body must possess the power to appoint, evaluate, or dismiss the employee to hold a closed session under this exception.<sup>29</sup> That authority may be delegated to a subsidiary appointed body.<sup>30</sup>

An employee must be given at least 24 hours notice of any closed session convened to hear specific complaints or charges against him or her. This occurs when the legislative body is reviewing evidence, which could include live testimony, and adjudicating conflicting testimony offered as evidence. A legislative body may examine (or exclude) witnesses,<sup>31</sup> and the California Attorney General has opined that, when an affected employee and advocate have an official or essential role to play, they may be permitted to participate in the closed session.<sup>32</sup> The employee has the right to have the specific complaints and charges discussed in a public session rather than closed session.<sup>33</sup> If the employee is not given the 24-hour prior notice, any disciplinary action is null and void.<sup>34</sup>

However, an employee is not entitled to notice and a hearing where the purpose of the closed session is to consider a performance evaluation. The Attorney General and the courts have determined that personnel performance evaluations do not constitute complaints and charges, which are more akin to accusations made against a person.<sup>35</sup>

**Q.** Must 24 hours notice be given to an employee whose negative performance evaluation is to be considered by the legislative body in closed session?

**A.** *No, the notice is reserved for situations where the body is to hear complaints and charges from witnesses.*

Correct labeling of the closed session on the agenda is critical. A closed session agenda that identified discussion of an employment contract was not sufficient to allow dismissal of an employee.<sup>36</sup> An incorrect agenda description can result in invalidation of an action and much embarrassment.

For purposes of the personnel exception, “employee” specifically includes an officer or an independent contractor who functions as an officer or an employee. Examples of the former include a city manager, district general manager or superintendent. Examples of the latter include a legal counsel or engineer hired on contract to act as local agency attorney or chief engineer.

Elected officials, appointees to the governing body or subsidiary bodies, and independent contractors other than those discussed above are not employees for purposes of the personnel exception.<sup>37</sup> Action on individuals who are not “employees” must also be public — including discussing and voting on appointees to committees, or debating the merits of independent contractors, or considering a complaint against a member of the legislative body itself.

The personnel exception specifically prohibits discussion or action on proposed compensation in closed session, except for a disciplinary reduction in pay. Among other things, that means there can be no personnel closed sessions on a salary change (other than a disciplinary reduction) between any unrepresented individual and the legislative body. However, a legislative body may address the compensation of an unrepresented individual, such as a city manager, in a closed session as part of a labor negotiation (discussed later in this chapter), yet another example of the importance of using correct agenda descriptions.

Reclassification of a job must be public, but an employee's ability to fill that job may be considered in closed session.

Any closed session action to appoint, employ, dismiss, accept the resignation of, or otherwise affect the employment status of a public employee must be reported at the public meeting during which the closed session is held. That report must identify the title of the position, but not the names of all persons considered for an employment position.<sup>38</sup> However, a report on a dismissal or non-renewal of an employment contract must be deferred until administrative remedies, if any, are exhausted.<sup>39</sup>

**"I have some important news to announce," said Mayor Garcia. "We've decided to terminate the contract of the city manager, effective immediately. The council has met in closed session and we've negotiated six months severance pay."**

**"Unfortunately, that has some serious budget consequences, so we've had to delay phase two of the East Area Project."**

*This may be an improper use of the personnel closed session if the council agenda described the item as the city manager's evaluation. In addition, other than labor negotiations, any action on individual compensation must be taken in open session. Caution should be exercised to not discuss in closed session issues, such as budget impacts in this hypothetical, beyond the scope of the posted closed session notice.*

## Labor negotiations

The Brown Act allows closed sessions for some aspects of labor negotiations. Different provisions (discussed below) apply to school and community college districts.

A legislative body may meet in closed session to instruct its bargaining representatives, which may be one or more of its members,<sup>40</sup> on employee salaries and fringe benefits for both represented ("union") and non-represented employees. For represented employees, it may also consider working conditions that by law require negotiation. For the purpose of labor negotiation closed sessions, an "employee" includes an officer or an independent contractor who functions as an officer or an employee, but independent contractors who do not serve in the capacity of an officer or employee are not covered by this closed session exception.<sup>41</sup>

These closed sessions may take place before or during negotiations with employee representatives. Prior to the closed session, the legislative body must hold an open and public session in which it identifies its designated representatives.

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**PRACTICE TIP:** The personnel exception specifically prohibits discussion or action on proposed compensation in closed session except for a disciplinary reduction in pay.

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**PRACTICE TIP:** Prior to the closed session, the legislative body must hold an open and public session in which it identifies its designated representatives.

During its discussions with representatives on salaries and fringe benefits, the legislative body may also discuss available funds and funding priorities, but only to instruct its representative. The body may also meet in closed session with a conciliator who has intervened in negotiations.<sup>42</sup>

The approval of an agreement concluding labor negotiations with represented employees must be reported after the agreement is final and has been accepted or ratified by the other party. The report must identify the item approved and the other party or parties to the negotiation.<sup>43</sup> The labor closed sessions specifically cannot include final action on proposed compensation of one or more unrepresented employees.

### Labor negotiations — school and community college districts

Employee relations for school districts and community college districts are governed by the Rodda Act, where different meeting and special notice provisions apply. The entire board, for example, may negotiate in closed sessions.

Four types of meetings are exempted from compliance with the Rodda Act:

1. A negotiating session with a recognized or certified employee organization;
2. A meeting of a mediator with either side;
3. A hearing or meeting held by a fact finder or arbitrator; and
4. A session between the board and its bargaining agent, or the board alone, to discuss its position regarding employee working conditions and instruct its agent.<sup>44</sup>

Public participation under the Rodda Act also takes another form.<sup>45</sup> All initial proposals of both sides must be presented at public meetings and are public records. The public must be given reasonable time to inform itself and to express its views before the district may adopt its initial proposal. In addition, new topics of negotiations must be made public within 24 hours. Any votes on such a topic must be followed within 24 hours by public disclosure of the vote of each member.<sup>46</sup> The final vote must be in public.

### Other Education Code exceptions

The Education Code governs student disciplinary meetings by boards of school districts and community college districts. District boards may hold a closed session to consider the suspension or discipline of a student, if a public hearing would reveal personal, disciplinary, or academic information about the student contrary to state and federal pupil privacy law. The student's parent or guardian may request an open meeting.<sup>47</sup>

Community college districts may also hold closed sessions to discuss some student disciplinary matters, awarding of honorary degrees, or gifts from donors who prefer to remain anonymous.<sup>48</sup> Kindergarten through 12th grade districts may also meet in closed session to review the contents of the statewide assessment instrument.<sup>49</sup>

### Joint Powers Authorities

The legislative body of a joint powers authority may adopt a policy regarding limitations on disclosure of confidential information obtained in closed session, and may meet in closed session to discuss information that is subject to the policy.<sup>50</sup>

**PRACTICE TIP:** Attendance by the entire legislative body before a grand jury would not constitute a closed session meeting under the Brown Act.

## License applicants with criminal records

A closed session is permitted when an applicant, who has a criminal record, applies for a license or license renewal and the legislative body wishes to discuss whether the applicant is sufficiently rehabilitated to receive the license. The applicant and the applicant's attorney are authorized to attend the closed session meeting. If the body decides to deny the license, the applicant may withdraw the application. If the applicant does not withdraw, the body must deny the license in public, immediately or at its next meeting. No information from the closed session can be revealed without consent of the applicant, unless the applicant takes action to challenge the denial.<sup>51</sup>

## Public security

Legislative bodies may meet in closed session to discuss matters posing a threat to the security of public buildings, essential public services, including water, sewer, gas, or electric service, or to the public's right of access to public services or facilities over which the legislative body has jurisdiction. Closed session meetings for these purposes must be held with designated security or law enforcement officials including the Governor, Attorney General, district attorney, agency attorney, sheriff or chief of police, or their deputies or agency security consultant or security operations manager.<sup>52</sup> Action taken in closed session with respect to such public security issues is not reportable action.



## Multijurisdictional law enforcement agency

A joint powers agency formed to provide law enforcement services (involving drugs; gangs; sex crimes; firearms trafficking; felony possession of a firearm; high technology, computer, or identity theft; human trafficking; or vehicle theft) to multiple jurisdictions may hold closed sessions to discuss case records of an on-going criminal investigation, to hear testimony from persons involved in the investigation, and to discuss courses of action in particular cases.<sup>53</sup>

The exception applies to the legislative body of the joint powers agency and to any body advisory to it. The purpose is to prevent impairment of investigations, to protect witnesses and informants, and to permit discussion of effective courses of action.<sup>54</sup>

## Hospital peer review and trade secrets

Two specific kinds of closed sessions are allowed for district hospitals and municipal hospitals, under other provisions of law.<sup>55</sup>

1. A meeting to hear reports of hospital medical audit or quality assurance committees, or for related deliberations. However, an applicant or medical staff member whose staff privileges are the direct subject of a hearing may request a public hearing.
2. A meeting to discuss "reports involving trade secrets" — provided no action is taken.

A "trade secret" is defined as information which is not generally known to the public or competitors and which: 1) "derives independent economic value, actual or potential" by virtue of its restricted knowledge; 2) is necessary to initiate a new hospital service or program or facility; and 3) would, if prematurely disclosed, create a substantial probability of depriving the hospital of a substantial economic benefit.

The provision prohibits use of closed sessions to discuss transitions in ownership or management, or the district's dissolution.<sup>56</sup>



**PRACTICE TIP:** Meetings are either open or closed. There is nothing “in between.”<sup>62</sup>

### Other legislative bases for closed session

Since any closed session meeting of a legislative body must be authorized by the Legislature, it is important to carefully review the Brown Act to determine if there is a provision that authorizes a closed session for a particular subject matter. There are some less frequently encountered topics that are authorized to be discussed by a legislative body in closed session under the Brown Act, including: a response to a confidential final draft audit report from the Bureau of State Audits,<sup>57</sup> consideration of the purchase or sale of particular pension fund investments by a legislative body of a local agency that invests pension funds,<sup>58</sup> hearing a charge or complaint from a member enrolled in a health plan by a legislative body of a local agency that provides Medi-Cal services,<sup>59</sup> discussions by a county board of supervisors that governs a health plan licensed pursuant to the Knox-Keene Health Care Services Plan Act related to trade secrets or contract negotiations

concerning rates of payment,<sup>60</sup> and discussions by an insurance pooling joint powers agency related to a claim filed against, or liability of, the agency or a member of the agency.<sup>61</sup>

### Who may attend closed sessions

Meetings of a legislative body are either fully open or fully closed; there is nothing in between. Therefore, local agency officials and employees must pay particular attention to the authorized attendees for the particular type of closed session. As summarized above, the authorized attendees may differ based on the topic of the closed session. Closed sessions may involve only the members of the legislative body and only agency counsel, management and support staff, and consultants necessary for consideration of the matter that is the subject of closed session, with very limited exceptions for adversaries or witnesses with official roles in particular types of hearings (e.g., personnel disciplinary hearings and license hearings). In any case, individuals who do not have an official role in the closed session subject matters must be excluded from closed sessions.<sup>63</sup>

**Q.** May the lawyer for someone suing the agency attend a closed session in order to explain to the legislative body why it should accept a settlement offer?

**A.** *No, attendance in closed sessions is reserved exclusively for the agency’s advisors.*

### The confidentiality of closed session discussions

The Brown Act explicitly prohibits the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information acquired in a closed session by any person present, and offers various remedies to address breaches of confidentiality.<sup>64</sup> It is incumbent upon all those attending lawful closed sessions to protect the confidentiality of those discussions. One court has held that members of a legislative body cannot be compelled to divulge the content of closed session discussions through the discovery process.<sup>65</sup> Only the legislative body acting as a body may agree to divulge confidential closed session information; regarding attorney/client privileged communications, the entire body is the holder of the privilege and only the entire body can decide to waive the privilege.<sup>66</sup>

Before adoption of the Brown Act provision specifically prohibiting disclosure of closed session communications, agency attorneys and the Attorney General long opined that officials have a fiduciary duty to protect the confidentiality of closed session discussions. The Attorney General issued an opinion that it is “improper” for officials to disclose information received during a closed session regarding pending litigation,<sup>67</sup> though the Attorney General has also concluded that a local agency is preempted from adopting an ordinance criminalizing public disclosure of closed session discussions.<sup>68</sup> In any event, in 2002, the Brown Act was amended to prescribe particular remedies for breaches of confidentiality. These remedies include injunctive relief; and, if the breach is a willful disclosure of confidential information, the remedies include disciplinary action against an employee, and referral of a member of the legislative body to the grand jury.<sup>69</sup>

The duty of maintaining confidentiality, of course, must give way to the responsibility to disclose improper matters or discussions that may come up in closed sessions. In recognition of this public policy, under the Brown Act, a local agency may not penalize a disclosure of information learned during a closed session if the disclosure: 1) is made in confidence to the district attorney or the grand jury due to a perceived violation of law; 2) is an expression of opinion concerning the propriety or legality of actions taken in closed session, including disclosure of the nature and extent of the illegal action; or 3) is information that is not confidential.<sup>70</sup>

The interplay between these possible sanctions and an official’s first amendment rights is complex and beyond the scope of this guide. Suffice it to say that this is a matter of great sensitivity and controversy.

**“I want the press to know that I voted in closed session against filing the eminent domain action,” said Council Member Chang.**

**“Don’t settle too soon,” reveals Council Member Watson to the property owner, over coffee. “The city’s offer coming your way is not our bottom line.”**

*The first comment to the press may be appropriate if it is a part of an action taken by the City Council in closed session that must be reported publicly.<sup>71</sup> The second comment to the property owner is not — disclosure of confidential information acquired in closed session is expressly prohibited and harmful to the agency.*

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**PRACTICE TIP:** There is a strong interest in protecting the confidentiality of proper and lawful closed sessions.

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## ENDNOTES:

- 1 California Government Code section 54962
- 2 California Constitution, Art. 1, section 3
- 3 61 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 220 (1978); but see California Government Code section 54957.8 (multijurisdictional law enforcement agencies are authorized to meet in closed session to discuss the case records of ongoing criminal investigations, and other related matters).
- 4 California Government Code section 54957.1
- 5 California Government Code section 54954.5
- 6 California Government Code section 54954.2
- 7 California Government Code section 54954.5
- 8 California Government Code sections 54956.9 and 54957.7
- 9 California Government Code section 54957.1(a)
- 10 California Government Code section 54957.1(b)
- 11 California Government Code section 54957.2
- 12 *Hamilton v. Town of Los Gatos* (1989) 213 Cal.App.3d 1050; 2 Cal.Code Regs. section 18707
- 13 *Roberts v. City of Palmdale* (1993) 5 Cal.4th 363
- 14 California Government Code section 54956.9; *Shapiro v. Board of Directors of Center City Development Corp.* (2005) 134 Cal.App.4th 170 (agency must be a party to the litigation).
- 15 82 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 29 (1999)
- 16 *Page v. Miracosta Community College District* (2009) 180 Cal.App.4th 471
- 17 “*The Brown Act*,” California Attorney General (2003), p. 40
- 18 California Government Code section 54956.9(g)
- 19 *Trancas Property Owners Association v. City of Malibu* (2006) 138 Cal.App.4th 172
- 20 Government Code section 54956.9(e)
- 21 California Government Code section 54957.1
- 22 California Government Code section 54956.8
- 23 *Shapiro v. San Diego City Council* (2002) 96 Cal.App.4th 904; see also 93 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 51 (2010) (redevelopment agency may not convene a closed session to discuss rehabilitation loan for a property already subleased to a loan recipient, even if the loan incorporates some of the sublease terms and includes an operating covenant governing the property); 94 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 82 (2011) (real estate closed session may address form, manner and timing of consideration and other items that cannot be disclosed without revealing price and terms).
- 24 73 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 1 (1990)
- 25 California Government Code sections 54956.8 and 54954.5(b)
- 26 California Government Code section 54957.1(a)(1)
- 27 California Government Code section 54957(b)
- 28 63 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 153 (1980); but see *Duvall v. Board of Trustees* (2000) 93 Cal.App.4th 902 (board may discuss personnel evaluation criteria, process and other preliminary matters in closed session but only if related to the evaluation of a particular employee).
- 29 *Gillespie v. San Francisco Public Library Commission* (1998) 67 Cal.App.4th 1165; 85 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 77 (2002)
- 30 *Gillespie v. San Francisco Public Library Commission* (1998) 67 Cal.App.4th 1165; 80 Ops.Cal.Atty. Gen. 308 (1997). Interviews of candidates to fill a vacant staff position conducted by a temporary committee appointed by the governing body may be done in closed session.

- 31 California Government Code section 54957(b)(3)
- 32 88 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 16 (2005)
- 33 *Morrison v. Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles* (2003) 107 Cal.App.4th 860
- 34 California Government Code section 54957(b); but see *Bollinger v. San Diego Civil Service Commission* (1999) 71 Cal.App.4th 568 (notice not required for closed session deliberations regarding complaints or charges, when there was a public evidentiary hearing prior to closed session).
- 35 78 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 218 (1995); *Bell v. Vista Unified School District* (2000) 82 Cal.App.4th 672; *Furtado v. Sierra Community College* (1998) 68 Cal.App.4th 876; *Fischer v. Los Angeles Unified School District* (1999) 70 Cal.App.4th 87
- 36 *Moreno v. City of King* (2005) 127 Cal.App.4th 17
- 37 California Government Code section 54957
- 38 *Gillespie v. San Francisco Public Library Commission* (1998) 67 Cal.App.4th 1165
- 39 California Government Code section 54957.1(a)(5)
- 40 California Government Code section 54957.6
- 41 California Government Code section 54957.6(b); see also 98 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 41 (2015) (a project labor agreement between a community college district and workers hired by contractors or subcontractors is not a proper subject of closed session for labor negotiations because the workers are not “employees” of the district).
- 42 California Government Code section 54957.6; and 51 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 201 (1968)
- 43 California Government Code section 54957.1(a)(6)
- 44 California Government Code section 3549.1
- 45 California Government Code section 3540
- 46 California Government Code section 3547
- 47 California Education Code section 48918; but see *Rim of the World Unified School District v. Superior Court* (2003) 104 Cal.App.4th 1393 (Section 48918 preempted by the Federal Family Educational Right and Privacy Act in regard to expulsion proceedings).
- 48 California Education Code section 72122
- 49 California Education Code section 60617
- 50 California Government Code section 54956.96
- 51 California Government Code section 54956.7
- 52 California Government Code section 54957
- 53 *McKee v. Los Angeles Interagency Metropolitan Police Apprehension Crime Task Force* (2005) 134 Cal. App.4th 354
- 54 California Government Code section 54957.8
- 55 California Government Code section 54962
- 56 California Health and Safety Code section 32106
- 57 California Government Code section 54956.75
- 58 California Government Code section 54956.81
- 59 California Government Code section 54956.86
- 60 California Government Code section 54956.87
- 61 California Government Code section 54956.95
- 62 46 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 34 (1965)
- 63 82 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 29 (1999)

- 64 Government Code section 54963
- 65 *Kleitman v. Superior Court* (1999) 74 Cal.App.4th 324, 327; see also California Government Code section 54963.
- 66 *Roberts v. City of Palmdale* (1993) 5 Cal.4th 363
- 67 80 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 231 (1997)
- 68 76 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 289 (1993)
- 69 California Government Code section 54963
- 70 California Government Code section 54963
- 71 California Government Code section 54957.1

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# Chapter 6

## REMEDIES

Invalidation.....	56
Applicability to Past Actions .....	57
Civil action to prevent future violations .....	57
Costs and attorney’s fees .....	58
Criminal complaints.....	58
Voluntary resolution.....	59

# Chapter 6

## REMEDIES



Certain violations of the Brown Act are designated as misdemeanors, although by far the most commonly used enforcement provisions are those that authorize civil actions to invalidate specified actions taken in violation of the Brown Act and to stop or prevent future violations. Still, despite all the safeguards and remedies to enforce them, it is ultimately impossible for the public to monitor every aspect of public officials' interactions. Compliance ultimately results from regular training and a good measure of self-regulation on the part of public officials. This chapter discusses the remedies available to the public when that self-regulation is ineffective.

### Invalidation

Any interested person, including the district attorney, may seek to invalidate certain actions of a legislative body on the ground that they violate the Brown Act.<sup>1</sup> Violations of the Brown Act, however, cannot be invalidated if they involve the following types of actions:

- Those taken in substantial compliance with the law. No Brown Act violation is found when the given notice substantially complies with the Brown Act, even when the notice erroneously cites to the wrong Brown Act section, but adequately advises the public that the Board will meet with legal counsel to discuss potential litigation in closed session;<sup>2</sup>
- Those involving the sale or issuance of notes, bonds or other indebtedness, or any related contracts or agreements;
- Those creating a contractual obligation, including a contract awarded by competitive bid for other than compensation for professional services, upon which a party has in good faith relied to its detriment;
- Those connected with the collection of any tax; or
- Those in which the complaining party had actual notice at least 72 hours prior to the regular meeting or 24 hours prior to the special meeting, as the case may be, at which the action is taken.

Before filing a court action seeking invalidation, a person who believes that a violation has occurred must send a written "cure or correct" demand to the legislative body. This demand must clearly describe the challenged action and the nature of the claimed violation. This demand must be sent within 90 days of the alleged violation or 30 days if the action was taken in open session but in violation of Section 54954.2, which requires (subject to specific exceptions) that only properly agendaized items are acted on by the governing body during a meeting.<sup>3</sup> The legislative body then has up to 30 days to cure and correct its action. If it does not act, any lawsuit must be filed within the next 15 days. The purpose of this requirement is to offer the body an opportunity to consider whether a violation has occurred and to weigh its options before litigation is filed.

Although just about anyone has standing to bring an action for invalidation,<sup>4</sup> the challenger must show prejudice as a result of the alleged violation.<sup>5</sup> An action to invalidate fails to state a cause of action against the agency if the body deliberated but did not take an action.<sup>6</sup>

### Applicability to Past Actions

Any interested person, including the district attorney, may file a civil action to determine whether past actions of a legislative body occurring on or after January 1, 2013 constitute violations of the Brown Act and are subject to a mandamus, injunction, or declaratory relief action.<sup>7</sup> Before filing an action, the interested person must, within nine months of the alleged violation of the Brown Act, submit a “cease and desist” letter to the legislative body, clearly describing the past action and the nature of the alleged violation.<sup>8</sup> The legislative body has 30 days after receipt of the letter to provide an unconditional commitment to cease and desist from the past action.<sup>9</sup> If the body fails to take any action within the 30-day period or takes an action other than an unconditional commitment, a lawsuit may be filed within 60 days.<sup>10</sup>

The legislative body’s unconditional commitment must be approved at a regular or special meeting as a separate item of business and not on the consent calendar.<sup>11</sup> The unconditional commitment must be substantially in the form set forth in the Brown Act.<sup>12</sup> No legal action may thereafter be commenced regarding the past action.<sup>13</sup> However, an action of the legislative body in violation of its unconditional commitment constitutes an independent violation of the Brown Act and a legal action consequently may be commenced without following the procedural requirements for challenging past actions.<sup>14</sup>

The legislative body may rescind its prior unconditional commitment by a majority vote of its membership at a regular meeting as a separate item of business not on the consent calendar. At least 30 days written notice of the intended rescission must be given to each person to whom the unconditional commitment was made and to the district attorney. Upon rescission, any interested person may commence a legal action regarding the past actions without following the procedural requirements for challenging past actions.<sup>15</sup>

### Civil action to prevent future violations

The district attorney or any interested person can file a civil action asking the court to:

- Stop or prevent violations or threatened violations of the Brown Act by members of the legislative body of a local agency;
- Determine the applicability of the Brown Act to actions or threatened future action of the legislative body;
- Determine whether any rule or action by the legislative body to penalize or otherwise discourage the expression of one or more of its members is valid under state or federal law; or
- Compel the legislative body to tape record its closed sessions.

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**PRACTICE TIP:** A lawsuit to invalidate must be preceded by a demand to cure and correct the challenged action in order to give the legislative body an opportunity to consider its options. The Brown Act does not specify how to cure or correct a violation; the best method is to rescind the action being complained of and start over, or reaffirm the action if the local agency relied on the action and rescinding the action would prejudice the local agency.

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It is not necessary for a challenger to prove a past pattern or practice of violations by the local agency in order to obtain injunctive relief. A court may presume when issuing an injunction that a single violation will continue in the future where the public agency refuses to admit to the alleged violation or to renounce or curtail the practice.<sup>16</sup> Note, however, that a court may not compel elected officials to disclose their recollections of what transpired in a closed session.<sup>17</sup>

Upon finding a violation of the Brown Act pertaining to closed sessions, a court may compel the legislative body to tape record its future closed sessions. In a subsequent lawsuit to enforce the Brown Act alleging a violation occurring in closed session, a court may upon motion of the plaintiff review the tapes if there is good cause to think the Brown Act has been violated, and make public the relevant portion of the closed session recording.

### Costs and attorney's fees

Someone who successfully invalidates an action taken in violation of the Brown Act or who successfully enforces one of the Brown Act's civil remedies may seek court costs and reasonable attorney's fees. Courts have held that attorney's fees must be awarded to a successful plaintiff unless special circumstances exist that would make a fee award against the public agency unjust.<sup>18</sup> When evaluating how to respond to assertions that the Brown Act has been violated, elected officials and their lawyers should assume that attorney's fees will be awarded against the agency if a violation of the Act is proven.

An attorney's fee award may only be directed against the local agency and not the individual members of the legislative body. If the local agency prevails, it may be awarded court costs and attorney's fees if the court finds the lawsuit was clearly frivolous and lacking in merit.<sup>19</sup>

### Criminal complaints

A violation of the Brown Act by a member of the legislative body who acts with the improper intent described below is punishable as a misdemeanor.<sup>20</sup>

A criminal violation has two components. The first is that there must be an overt act — a member of a legislative body must attend a meeting at which action is taken in violation of the Brown Act.<sup>21</sup>

"Action taken" is not only an actual vote, but also a collective decision, commitment or promise by a majority of the legislative body to make a positive or negative decision.<sup>22</sup> If the meeting involves mere deliberation without the taking of action, there can be no misdemeanor penalty.

A violation occurs for a tentative as well as final decision.<sup>23</sup> In fact, criminal liability is triggered by a member's participation in a meeting in violation of the Brown Act — not whether that member has voted with the majority or minority, or has voted at all.

The second component of a criminal violation is that action is taken with the intent of a member "to deprive the public of information to which the member knows or has reason to know the public is entitled" by the Brown Act.<sup>24</sup>

**PRACTICE TIP:** Attorney's fees will likely be awarded if a violation of the Brown Act is proven.

As with other misdemeanors, the filing of a complaint is up to the district attorney. Although criminal prosecutions of the Brown Act are uncommon, district attorneys in some counties aggressively monitor public agencies' adherence to the requirements of the law.

Some attorneys and district attorneys take the position that a Brown Act violation may be pursued criminally under Government Code section 1222.<sup>25</sup> There is no case law to support this view; if anything, the existence of an express criminal remedy within the Brown Act would suggest otherwise.<sup>26</sup>

## Voluntary resolution

Arguments over Brown Act issues often become emotional on all sides. Newspapers trumpet relatively minor violations, unhappy residents fume over an action, and legislative bodies clam up about information better discussed in public. Hard lines are drawn and rational discussion breaks down. The district attorney or even the grand jury occasionally becomes involved. Publicity surrounding alleged violations of the Brown Act can result in a loss of confidence by constituents in the legislative body. There are times when it may be preferable to consider re-noticing and rehearing, rather than litigating, an item of significant public interest, particularly when there is any doubt about whether the open meeting requirements were satisfied.

At bottom, agencies that regularly train their officials and pay close attention to the requirements of the Brown Act will have little reason to worry about enforcement.

## ENDNOTES:

- 1 California Government Code section 54960.1. Invalidation is limited to actions that violate the following sections of the Brown Act: section 54953 (the basic open meeting provision); sections 54954.2 and 54954.5 (notice and agenda requirements for regular meetings and closed sessions); 54954.6 (tax hearings); 54956 (special meetings); and 54956.5 (emergency situations). Violations of sections not listed above cannot give rise to invalidation actions, but are subject to the other remedies listed in section 54960.1.
- 2 *Castaic Lake Water Agency v. Newhall County Water District* (2015) 238 Cal.App.4th 1196, 1198
- 3 California Government Code section 54960.1 (b) and (c)(1)
- 4 *McKee v. Orange Unified School District* (2003) 110 Cal. App.4th 1310, 1318-1319
- 5 *Cohan v. City of Thousand Oaks* (1994) 30 Cal.App.4th 547, 556, 561
- 6 *Boyle v. City of Redondo Beach* (1999) 70 Cal.App.4th 1109, 1116-17, 1118
- 7 Government Code Section 54960.2(a); Senate Bill No. 1003, Section 4 (2011-2012 Session)
- 8 Government Code Sections 54960.2(a)(1), (2)
- 9 Government Code Section 54960.2(b)



- 10 Government Code Section 54960.2(a)(4)
- 11 Government Code Section 54960.2(c)(2)
- 12 Government Code Section 54960.2(c)(1)
- 13 Government Code Section 54960.2(c)(3)
- 14 Government Code Section 54960.2(d)
- 15 Government Code Section 54960.2(e)
- 16 *California Alliance for Utility Safety and Education (CAUSE) v. City of San Diego* (1997) 56 Cal.App.4th 1024; *Common Cause v. Stirling* (1983) 147 Cal.App.3d 518, 524; *Accord Shapiro v. San Diego City Council* (2002) 96 Cal. App. 4th 904, 916 & fn.6
- 17 *Kleitman v. Superior Court* (1999) 74 Cal.App.4th 324, 334-36
- 18 *Los Angeles Times Communications, LLC v. Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors* (2003) 112 Cal. App.4th 1313, 1327-29 and cases cited therein
- 19 California Government Code section 54960.5
- 20 California Government Code section 54959. A misdemeanor is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or up to six months in county jail, or both. California Penal Code section 19. Employees of the agency who participate in violations of the Brown Act cannot be punished criminally under section 54959. However, at least one district attorney instituted criminal action against employees based on the theory that they criminally conspired with the members of the legislative body to commit a crime under section 54949.
- 21 California Government Code section 54959
- 22 California Government Code section 54952.6
- 23 61 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen.283 (1978)
- 24 California Government Code section 54959
- 25 California Government Code section 1222 provides that “[e]very wilful omission to perform any duty enjoined by law upon any public officer, or person holding any public trust or employment, where no special provision is made for the punishment of such delinquency, is punishable as a misdemeanor.”
- 26 The principle of statutory construction known as *expressio unius est exclusio alterius* supports the view that section 54959 is the exclusive basis for criminal liability under the Brown Act.

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# CODE OF ETHICS

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## **Chapter 2.02 CODE OF ETHICS FOR PUBLIC OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES**

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### **2.02.005 Code Review**

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All official boards, commissions, and committees of the City are to formally review the following Code of Ethics provided in this chapter with their members annually during their first meeting in the month of April. New members are to be provided a copy of the Code of Ethics for their review when they are appointed or elected to each board, commission, or committee. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1437 § 1, 1975)

### **2.02.010 Declaration of Policy**

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The proper operation of municipal government requires that public officials and employees be independent, impartial, and responsible to the people; that governmental decisions and policy be made in the proper channels of the governmental structure; and that public office not be used for personal gain. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

### **2.02.020 Responsibilities of Public Office**

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Public officials are all elective officials of the City and the members of all official boards, commissions, and committees of the City. Public officials and employees are bound to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State and to carry out the laws of the nation, state, and municipality. Public officials and employees are bound to observe in their official acts the highest standards of morality and to discharge faithfully the duties of their offices, regardless of personal considerations; recognizing that the public interest must be their primary concern, and that conduct in both their official and private affairs should be above reproach. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

### **2.02.030 Dedicated Service**

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Public officials and employees should not exceed their authority or breach the law or ask others to do so, and they should work in full cooperation with other public officials and employees unless prohibited from so doing by law or the officially recognized confidentiality of their work. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

### **2.02.040 Fair and Equal Treatment**

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Preferential consideration of the request or petition of any individual citizen or group of citizens shall not be given. No person shall receive special advantages beyond that which are available to any other citizen. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

### **2.02.050 Use of Public Property**

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No public official or employee shall request or permit the use of City-owned vehicles, equipment, materials, or property for personal convenience or profit, except when such services are available to the public generally or are provided as municipal policy for the use of such public official or employee in the conduct of official business. No public official or employee shall use the time of any City employee during working hours for personal convenience or profit. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

### **2.02.060 Obligations to Citizens**

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A. CONFLICT WITH PROPER DISCHARGE OF DUTIES. No public official or employee, while serving as such, shall have any interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or engage in any business or transaction or

professional activity, or incur any obligation of any nature that is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of his or her duties in the public interest and of his or her responsibilities as prescribed by law.

B. **INCOMPATIBLE EMPLOYMENT.** No public official or employee shall accept other employment that he or she has reason to believe will either impair his or her independence of judgment as to his or her official duties or require him or her or induce him or her to disclose confidential information acquired by him or her in the course of and by reason of his or her official duties.

C. **DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.** No public official or employee shall willfully and knowingly disclose for pecuniary gain to any other person confidential information acquired by him or her in the course of and by reason of his or her official duties nor shall any public official or employee use any such information for the purpose of pecuniary gain.

D. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST.** A conflict of interest exists in a matter before a public official for consideration or determination if:

1. The public official has a substantial financial or substantial personal interest in the outcome or as owner, member, partner, officer, employee, or stockholder of any corporation or other professional enterprise that will be affected by the outcome, and such interest is or may be adverse to the public interest in the proper performance of governmental duties by the public official;

2. The public official has reason to believe or expect that he or she will derive direct monetary gain or suffer a direct monetary loss, as the case may be, by reason of his or her official activity;

3. The public official, because of bias, prejudice, or because he or she has prejudged a matter set for public hearing, is incapable because of such bias, prejudice or prejudgment of granting to the matter before him or her a fair and impartial hearing.

4. Personal interest as distinguished from financial interest is defined as including, among other matters, an interest arising from blood or marriage relationships, or close business association. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

#### **2.02.070 Disclosure of Interest and Disqualification**

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A. Any Councilmember who has a conflict of interest as defined herein, in any matter before the City Council, shall disclose such fact on the record of the City Council and refrain from participating in any discussion of voting thereon, provided that such exceptions shall be observed as are required by law.

B. Any member of any official board, commission, or committee who has a conflict of interest as defined herein in any matter before the board, commission, or committee of which he or she is a member, shall disclose such fact on the record of such board, commission, or committee and refrain from participating in any discussion or voting thereon, provided that such exceptions shall be observed as are required by law.

C. Any employee who has a financial or other special interest in a matter before the City Council or any board, commission, or committee and who participates in discussion with, or gives an official opinion to the City Council, or to such board, commission, or committee relating to such matter, shall disclose on the record of the City Council or such board, commission, or committee, as the case may be, the nature and extent of such interest. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

#### **2.02.080 Compliance with State Law**

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Public officials and employees of the City shall comply with applicable provisions of state law relative to conflicts of interest and generally regulating the conduct of public officials and employees. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

#### **2.02.090 Violations—Actions**

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The violation of any provision of this chapter shall be:

A. As to all City employees, grounds for dismissal from City employment;

B. As to any appointed position on any board, commission, or committee, grounds for removal from any such board, commission, or committee;

C. As to any prosecution of any elected public official, the City Council shall make findings of fact by at least a vote of three City Councilmembers that an elected public official has, in fact, violated this chapter as a prerequisite to prosecution. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

### **2.02.100 State Laws—Control**

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This chapter and its application are intended to be supplemental to and consistent with all applicable state laws. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

### **2.02.110 Violations—Penalty**

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Any person violating any of the provisions of this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, is punishable as provided in Section 1.04.010 of this Code. (2813 § 1, 2012; 1301 § 1, 1972)

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**RESOLUTION  
AND  
ORDINANCE**

GARDEN GROVE CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO. 9540-19

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GARDEN GROVE  
DEFINING THE COMPOSITION OF THE MEASURE O – CITIZENS' OVERSIGHT  
COMMITTEE, PURPOSE, TERMS OF OFFICE FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS, THE SCOPE  
OF THE COMMITTEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS

WHEREAS, on November 6, 2018, Garden Grove voters passed Ordinance No. 2897, also known as Measure O, imposing a one-cent (1%) transactions and use (sales) tax;

WHEREAS, Garden Grove merchants will begin collecting the tax on behalf of the City of Garden Grove on April 1, 2019;

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 2897 states that the measure will be "subject to a clear system of accountability, including public audits and disclosures of all funds spent to ensure that all funds are spent properly" and "include strict Citizen Oversight, giving an independent voice in overseeing the measure's funds";

WHEREAS, this Resolution establishes a Measure O – Citizens' Oversight Committee; and

WHEREAS, this Resolution sets the composition of the Measure O – Citizens' Oversight Committee, its purpose, the terms of office, and defines the scope of the committee's responsibilities; and other related matters.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY OF GARDEN GROVE CITY COUNCIL DOES  
HEREBY RESOLVES, DETERMINES, AND FINDS AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Measure O – Citizens' Oversight Committee's composition, terms of office, scope of responsibilities and other related matters shall be as described in Exhibit A to this Resolution, incorporated herein by reference.

SECTION 2. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon its passage and adoption.

SECTION 3. That the City Clerk shall certify to the passage and adoption of this Resolution, and enter it into the book of original Resolutions.

Adopted this 26<sup>th</sup> day of February 2019.

ATTEST:

/s/ STEVEN R. JONES  
MAYOR

/s/ TERESA POMEROY, CMC  
CITY CLERK

STATE OF CALIFORNIA    )  
COUNTY OF ORANGE    ) SS:  
CITY OF GARDEN GROVE )

I, TERESA POMEROY, City Clerk of the City of Garden Grove, do hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the City Council of the City of Garden Grove, California, at a meeting held on February 26, 2019, by the following vote:

AYES:	COUNCIL MEMBERS:	(7)	BRIETIGAM, O'NEILL, NGUYEN T., BUI KLOPFENSTEIN, NGUYEN K., JONES
NOES:	COUNCIL MEMBERS:	(0)	NONE
ABSENT:	COUNCIL MEMBERS:	(0)	NONE

/s/ TERESA POMEROY, CMC  
CITY CLERK

## EXHIBIT A

### City of Garden Grove Measure O – Public Safety/9-1-1 and Vital City Services Citizens' Oversight Committee

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of the Measure O Citizens' Oversight Committee will be to review the City's annual general fund budget, mid-year budget, and year-end audited financial information in regards to the receipt and expenditure of the fiscal year's one-cent transactions and use (sales) tax revenue. This review will be based on the City's Measure O Ordinance No. 2897 and input received via the Community Priorities Survey. The committee will communicate its findings to the public and the City Council annually.
2. **Committee Responsibilities:** The oversight committee responsibilities for each of the years that the Measure O one-cent (1%) transactions and use (sales) tax is collected is:
  - 2.1. Review year-end audited annual financial information which will include Measure O tax revenue and expenditures.
  - 2.2. Review the mid-year financial report of general fund revenues and expenditures.
  - 2.3. Review the annual general fund operating budget.
  - 2.4. Review the above reports based on the City's Measure O Ordinance No. 2897 and input via the Community Priorities Survey.
  - 2.5. Hear public testimony and comments regarding Measure O.

The Committee shall produce a report that records the results of its review of the City's annual general fund budget, mid-year budget and year-end audited financial information for expenditures from revenue generated from the Measure O tax. The report shall be presented to the Council at a public meeting and shall be a public record. The report will also be posted on the City's website. The committee shall confine itself specifically to a high level review of revenues generated under Measure O and related expenditures.

The Oversight Committee responsibilities do NOT include the following:

- Enterprise and other funds generated independent of Measure O;
- Enterprise and other fund expenditures independent of Measure O;
- Decision-making on spending priorities;
- Authority to direct City staff or other officials.

3. **Committee Composition:** The Oversight Committee shall consist of seven members. At least one member should represent the business community as an owner or representative of a local business; at least one member should be an active senior resident (age 62 or older); at least two members should have background in finance/accounting; and the remaining three members may be members of the community at-large.

The following rules apply to all members:

- 3.1. All members shall be at least 18-years of age and reside within the State of California and be residents or business owners/representatives in the City of Garden Grove. All members shall be a registered voter. (Confirmation can be made by the voter through the OC Registrar of Voters website.)
- 3.2. Committee members may not be current Garden Grove employees, Garden Grove City Council members, or any vendor, contractor, or consultant with active contracts or agreements with the City of Garden Grove.
- 3.3. In making its appointment to the Oversight Committee, the Council may, at its discretion, consider various factors applicable to each candidate including, but not limited to, (i) residency in the City, (ii) whether the candidate is a registered voter within the City, and (iii) the candidate's professional (including financial or accounting experience) and educational background which supports or complements the purposes of the Oversight Committee.
4. **Committee is Advisory:** Advisory bodies play an important role in City government by assisting and advising the City Council. The primary role of an advisory body is to provide judicious advice to the City Council, the elected policy making body of the City. The advisory body's role can include the review of written and financial information, facilitating the study of issues, assessing the alternatives regarding issues of community concern and ultimately forwarding recommendations through Staff Liaison to the City Council for its consideration.

5. **Committee Member Terms of Office:** Pursuant to Garden Grove Municipal Code Section 2.21.012 Terms of Office, the term of office for all members of boards, commissions, and committees shall be from the date of appointment to the date of the first meeting of the City Council following each regular municipal election; provided, however, that a member shall remain in office until his or her successor is appointed or as otherwise set forth herein.

First Term		Future Terms – 2 years	
Appointment	Expiration	Appointment	Expiration
April 2019	December 2020	January 2021	December 2022

6. **Committee Organization and Use of Existing City Practices:** The Committee shall follow all relevant existing City practices in terms of organization and conduct. Specifically:
- 6.1. Elect the Chair and Vice Chair;
  - 6.2. Operate in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Public Meetings Act and shall conduct its meetings in accordance with the provisions thereof;
  - 6.3. Operate in accordance with City of Garden Grove - City Council Policy, Commission/Committee Appointments, except where the Measure O Citizens' Oversight Committee Resolution (Policies) specifically addresses a topic;
  - 6.4. Operate in accordance with City of Garden Grove Administrative Directives or Policies related to Ethics Training for Elected Officials; Appointees to Certain Boards, Commissions, and Committees; and Designated Employees;
  - 6.5. Comply with all State and local mandated conflict of interest/economic interest disclosure requirements, if required by law;
  - 6.6. Receive no compensation for service on the Committee.
7. **Committee Appointments / Attendance / Removal / Vacancy:** The Committee shall be appointed through the normal City Council Committee/Commission Appointments process. Pursuant to Garden Grove Municipal Code Section 2.21.010, the Mayor, with the approval of the City Council, shall make all appointments to boards, commissions, and committees unless otherwise specifically provided by statute. There will be an application for Measure O Oversight Committee consideration. The power to make determinations as to appointments, attendance, removal and vacancies on the Oversight Committee is expressly reserved by the City Council.

- 7.1. For committee's to function effectively and accomplish their goals, all members must be active participants. This means all members must be present at all meetings. Committee members must inform the staff liaison prior to the meeting if they are unable to attend.
  - 7.2. The Council may remove any Committee members for any reason in accordance with established committee/commission removal processes outlined in Municipal Code section 2.21.014.
  - 7.3. If a Committee member resigns or is removed by the Council, his or her seat shall be declared vacant. The Council in accordance with established appointment processes contained in Municipal Code section 2.21.13 shall fill any vacancies on the Committee.
  - 7.4. A Committee member may be removed as may otherwise be prescribed or required by law.
8. **Staff Support / Authority of Committee:** Staff from the Finance Department will have primary responsibility for providing administrative support to the Measure O Citizens' Oversight Committee as shall be consistent with the Committee's purpose. The City Manager or his/her designee may also act as staff liaison to the Committee. Oversight Committee members do not have the authority to direct staff of the City or other officials.
9. **Committee Meeting Schedule:** The City's budget development occurs from January through August; the audited financial statement is typically complete by the end of January; and the mid-year financial report is normally completed in March. Consequently, the Committee will be active from January through August each year with a minimum of two meetings anticipated annually. The committee will have the ability to meet up to four times annually as needed. The exact meeting schedule (days/times/locations) will be dependent upon the budget preparation schedule, which changes slightly from year to year. No specific hearing dates and times have been established in this resolution in order to allow staff to work with the appointed Committee members to identify days/times that work well for the membership. All Oversight Committee meetings will be public and will be agendized in accordance with the Brown Act.
10. **Committee Reports:** The Committee shall present to the Council, in public session, an annual written report which shall include the following:
- 10.1. A summary of the Committee's proceedings and activities during the most recent review period.
  - 10.2. A response to the following questions will be addressed in the annual report:

10.2.1. Does the current audited financial information reflect that the Measure O – Public Safety and Vital City Services tax was collected and appropriately spent?

10.2.2. Does the City's proposed General Fund annual budget and CIP plan protect and maintain the City's core services including public safety?

The report prepared by the Committee documenting their findings and recommendations will be presented to the City Council at a public meeting and will be public record. The report will also be posted on the City's website.

**11. Amendment of Policy and Regulations:** The policies and regulations of the Oversight Committee may be subject to later and further amendments by the City Council and its discretion.

ORDINANCE NO. 2897

AN INITIATIVE ORDINANCE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF GARDEN GROVE,  
ADDING CHAPTER 3.09 TO TITLE 3 OF THE GARDEN GROVE MUNICIPAL CODE,  
IMPOSING A TRANSACTIONS AND USE (SALES) TAX TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE  
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TAX AND FEE ADMINISTRATION

City Attorney Summary

*This Ordinance, presented to the City's voters for approval at the regular municipal election of November 6, 2018, imposes a 1% sales tax in the City.*

WHEREAS, people live in Garden Grove because it offers a better quality of life and better services than other nearby communities; and

WHEREAS, years of state takeaways and changes to state law have severely impacted the City's ability to provide the quality of life services that make Garden Grove a great place to live, work, and raise a family; and

WHEREAS, the State of California has taken millions in local tax dollars from Garden Grove since 1992. The City will continue to lose another \$3.5 million dollars every year in General Fund property tax revenues due to the State's required shift of Education Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF) and about \$13.7 million dollars in Redevelopment/Housing Tax Increment; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, the City was forced to return to the State of California \$9.8 million of redevelopment and housing tax increment that has been legally collected for critical economic, redevelopment and housing activities in Garden Grove. In addition, the dissolution of Redevelopment Agencies by the State has required the City's General Fund to pick up prior RDA obligations of \$3.9 million each year starting in 2012; and

WHEREAS, since 2009, the City has been forced to adopt General Fund budgets with structural deficits. For Fiscal Year 2018-19 that structural operating deficit has grown to \$4.2 million and the City has been using reserves to balance its General Fund operations; and

WHEREAS, in order to balance the FY 2018-19 Budget, various cost-reduction programs were implemented including an early-retirement incentive program and 5% budget reduction. Even with these cuts, the City's structural deficit is projected to increase from \$4.2 million to over \$75 million dollars annually within the next seven years; and

WHEREAS, eliminating the structural deficit will require additional deep cuts in all service areas, including police, 9-1-1 emergency response times, street, park, and public facilities maintenance; and

WHEREAS, response times for 9-1-1 calls are critical for stopping crime, protecting victims, and saving lives; and

WHEREAS, this measure will increase funding for neighborhood police patrols, retain officers on the street, and improve law enforcement response times to all neighborhoods in our city; and

WHEREAS, when you have an emergency, seconds count. The majority of calls to the City of Garden Grove's Fire Department are related to medical emergencies; and

WHEREAS, this measure will keep fire stations open and ensure that firefighters and paramedics can quickly respond to emergencies and save lives; and

WHEREAS, public safety is a top priority in Garden Grove and represents 71% of the City's General Fund. However, Public Safety staffing levels have not been restored to pre-recession levels even after making other significant citywide cuts and adding seven additional police officers over the past three fiscal years; and

WHEREAS, due in large part to statewide early prison release laws and voter approved initiatives that have changed many felonies to misdemeanors, overall Part I crimes (e.g., robberies, burglaries, aggravated assault and homicide) have increased by over 45% in Garden Grove since 2015 and homeless/mentally ill calls for service have increased by an alarming 47%; and

WHEREAS, policies enacted by Sacramento politicians like early release from prison and other changes to state laws are putting more criminals back on the street; and

WHEREAS, passing this measure will allow the Garden Grove Police Department to put more officers on the street to patrol neighborhoods and parks, and crack down on drugs and gangs, making our community safer; and

WHEREAS, without a continued local funding source the City will be forced to cut public safety services, including gang and drug prevention; neighborhood police patrols; police officer staffing at local schools; and consider reducing firefighting services. The City needs additional funds to continue to provide citywide crime prevention, gang and youth violence prevention and intervention programs and keep police officers in schools to keep kids off the streets and away from gangs and drugs; and

WHEREAS, this measure will allow the City police department to dedicate officers and resources to keep gang members and drug dealers from nearby communities out of our City, which will keep our neighborhoods safe; and

WHEREAS, the City needs funds to maintain firefighters and paramedics levels, and keep rapid 9-1-1 emergency response times so that people suffering from heart

attacks, strokes or other medical emergencies continue to receive the immediate, life-saving care they need; and

WHEREAS, the American Heart Association says that brain deterioration starts six minutes after a person stops breathing, but right now our local paramedics only meet that standard 38% of the time; and

WHEREAS, in 2007, more than 11,000 or 85% of calls to 9-1-1 were related to medical emergencies, like heart attacks, strokes, and car accidents; and

WHEREAS, with an aging population, this measure is needed to provide Garden Grove paramedics and firefighters with the staffing and resources they need to respond quickly and effectively to medical emergencies; and

WHEREAS, over the last few decades the City has used General Fund revenues to help support the maintenance of the community's local streets; fund park and playground equipment at the City's 21 neighborhood parks; and maintain City owned buildings, which include Police public safety buildings and fire stations. Going forward, starting with the FY 2019-20 Fiscal Year budget, none of these vital programs will be funded beyond the City's required allocation for OCTA grant eligibility; and

WHEREAS, an independent analysis of Garden Grove's infrastructure found that nearly 40% of our local streets and roads are in fair/very poor condition; and

WHEREAS, this measure will provide a local source of funding to invest in our roads by fixing potholes, curbs and sidewalks, and repaving streets, which will reduce wear-and-tear on cars and improve safety for drivers and pedestrians; and

WHEREAS, in light of the structural deficit, additional revenues are needed in order to preserve essential city services and the high quality of life in the City of Garden Grove; and

WHEREAS, this measure will help our local property values by making sure Garden Grove has well-maintained streets, safe and clean neighborhoods, and high quality public safety services, keeping our property values strong; and

WHEREAS, additional revenues will be subject to a clear system of accountability, including public audits and disclosures of all funds spent to ensure that all funds are spent properly; and

WHEREAS, this measure includes strict Citizen Oversight, giving an independent voice in overseeing this measure's funds; and

WHEREAS, all additional revenues raised by this measure will be used to fund essential city services in Garden Grove, and cannot be taken away by the state or used for other purposes.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF GARDEN GROVE HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Chapter 3.09 is hereby added to Title 3 of the Garden Grove Municipal Code to read as follows:

#### CHAPTER 3.09

#### TRANSACTIONS AND USE TAX

Section 3.09.010. TITLE. This chapter shall be known as the "Garden Grove Transactions and Use Tax Ordinance." The city of Garden Grove hereinafter shall be called "City." This chapter shall be applicable in the incorporated territory of the City.

Section 3.09.020. OPERATIVE DATE. "Operative Date" means the first day of the first calendar quarter commencing more than 110 days after the adoption of the ordinance enacting this chapter, the date of such adoption being as set forth below.

Section 3.09.030. PURPOSE. This chapter is adopted to achieve the following, among other purposes, and directs that the provisions hereof be interpreted in order to accomplish those purposes:

A. To impose a retail transactions and use tax in accordance with the provisions of Part 1.6 (commencing with Section 7251) of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code and Section 7285.9 of Part 1.7 of Division 2 which authorizes the City to adopt this tax ordinance which shall be operative if a majority of the electors voting on the measure vote to approve the imposition of the tax at an election called for that purpose.

B. To adopt a retail transactions and use tax ordinance that incorporates provisions identical to those of the Sales and Use Tax Law of the State of California insofar as those provisions are not inconsistent with the requirements and limitations contained in Part 1.6 of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

C. To adopt a retail transactions and use tax ordinance that imposes a tax and provides a measure therefore that can be administered and collected by the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration in a manner that adapts itself as fully as practicable to, and requires the least possible deviation from, the existing statutory and administrative procedures followed by the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration in administering and collecting the California State Sales and Use Taxes.

D. To adopt a retail transactions and use tax ordinance that can be administered in a manner that will be, to the greatest degree possible, consistent with the provisions of Part 1.6 of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, minimize the cost of collecting the transactions and use taxes, and at the same time, minimize the burden of record keeping upon persons subject to taxation under the provisions of this chapter.

Section 3.09.040. CONTRACT WITH STATE. Prior to the operative date, the City shall contract with the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration to perform all functions incident to the administration and operation of this transactions and use tax ordinance; provided, that if the City shall not have contracted with the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration prior to the operative date, it shall nevertheless so contract and in such a case the operative date shall be the first day of the first calendar quarter following the execution of such a contract.

Section 3.09.050. TRANSACTIONS TAX RATE. For the privilege of selling tangible personal property at retail, a tax is hereby imposed upon all retailers in the incorporated territory of the City at the rate of one percent (1%) of the gross receipts of any retailer from the sale of all tangible personal property sold at retail in said territory on and after the operative date of the ordinance enacting this chapter.

Section 3.09.060. PLACE OF SALE. For the purposes of this chapter, all retail sales are consummated at the place of business of the retailer unless the tangible personal property sold is delivered by the retailer or his agent to an out-of-state destination or to a common carrier for delivery to an out-of-state destination. The gross receipts from such sales shall include delivery charges, when such charges are subject to the state sales and use tax, regardless of the place to which delivery is made. In the event a retailer has no permanent place of business in the State or has more than one place of business, the place or places at which the retail sales are consummated shall be determined under rules and regulations to be prescribed and adopted by the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration.

Section 3.09.070. USE TAX RATE. An excise tax is hereby imposed on the storage, use or other consumption in the City of tangible personal property purchased from any retailer on and after the operative date of this ordinance for storage, use or other consumption in said territory at the rate of one percent (1%) of the sales price of the property. The sales price shall include delivery charges when such charges are subject to state sales or use tax regardless of the place to which delivery is made.

Section 3.09.080. ADOPTION OF PROVISIONS OF STATE LAW. Except as otherwise provided in this chapter and except insofar as they are inconsistent with the provisions of Part 1.6 of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, all of the provisions of Part 1 (commencing with Section 6001) of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code are hereby adopted and made a part of this chapter as though fully set forth herein.

Section 3.09.090. LIMITATIONS ON ADOPTION OF STATE LAW AND COLLECTION OF USE TAXES. In adopting the provisions of Part 1 of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code:

A. Wherever the State of California is named or referred to as the taxing agency, the name of this City shall be substituted therefor. However, the substitution shall not be made when:

1. The word "State" is used as a part of the title of the State Controller, State Treasurer, State Treasury, or the Constitution of the State of California;

2. The result of that substitution would require action to be taken by or against this City or any agency, officer, or employee thereof rather than by or against the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration, in performing the functions incident to the administration or operation of this chapter.

3. In those sections, including, but not necessarily limited to sections referring to the exterior boundaries of the State of California, where the result of the substitution would be to:

a. Provide an exemption from this tax with respect to certain sales, storage, use or other consumption of tangible personal property which would not otherwise be exempt from this tax while such sales, storage, use or other consumption remain subject to tax by the State under the provisions of Part 1 of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, or;

b. Impose this tax with respect to certain sales, storage, use or other consumption of tangible personal property which would not be subject to tax by the state under the said provision of that code.

4. In Sections 6701, 6702 (except in the last sentence thereof), 6711, 6715, 6737, 6797 or 6828 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

B. The word "City" shall be substituted for the word "State" in the phrase "retailer engaged in business in this State" in Section 6203 and in the definition of that phrase in Section 6203.

Section 3.09.100. PERMIT NOT REQUIRED. If a seller's permit has been issued to a retailer under Section 6067 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, an additional transactor's permit shall not be required by this chapter.

Section 3.09.110. EXEMPTIONS AND EXCLUSIONS.

A. There shall be excluded from the measure of the transactions tax and the use tax the amount of any sales tax or use tax imposed by the State of California or by any city, city and county, or county pursuant to the Bradley-Burns Uniform Local Sales and Use Tax Law or the amount of any state-administered transactions or use tax.

B. There are exempted from the computation of the amount of transactions tax the gross receipts from:

1. Sales of tangible personal property, other than fuel or petroleum products, to operators of aircraft to be used or consumed principally outside the county in which the sale is made and directly and exclusively in the use of such aircraft as common carriers of persons or property under the authority of the laws of this State, the United States, or any foreign government.

2. Sales of property to be used outside the City which is shipped to a point outside the City, pursuant to the contract of sale, by delivery to such point by the retailer or his agent, or by delivery by the retailer to a carrier for shipment to a consignee at such point. For the purposes of this paragraph, delivery to a point outside the City shall be satisfied:

a. With respect to vehicles (other than commercial vehicles) subject to registration pursuant to Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 4000) of Division 3 of the Vehicle Code, aircraft licensed in compliance with Section 21411 of the Public Utilities Code, and undocumented vessels registered under Division 3.5 (commencing with Section 9840) of the Vehicle Code by registration to an out-of-City address and by a declaration under penalty of perjury, signed by the buyer, stating that such address is, in fact, his or her principal place of residence; and

b. With respect to commercial vehicles, by registration to a place of business out-of-City and declaration under penalty of perjury, signed by the buyer, that the vehicle will be operated from that address.

3. The sale of tangible personal property if the seller is obligated to furnish the property for a fixed price pursuant to a contract entered into prior to the operative date of the ordinance enacting this chapter.

4. A lease of tangible personal property which is a continuing sale of such property, for any period of time for which the lessor is obligated to lease the property for an amount fixed by the lease prior to the operative date of this chapter.

5. For the purposes of subparagraphs (3) and (4) of this section, the sale or lease of tangible personal property shall be deemed not to be obligated pursuant to a contract or lease for any period of time for which any party

to the contract or lease has the unconditional right to terminate the contract or lease upon notice, whether or not such right is exercised.

C. There are exempted from the use tax imposed by this chapter, the storage, use or other consumption in this City of tangible personal property:

1. The gross receipts from the sale of which have been subject to a transactions tax under any state-administered transactions and use tax ordinance.

2. Other than fuel or petroleum products purchased by operators of aircraft and used or consumed by such operators directly and exclusively in the use of such aircraft as common carriers of persons or property for hire or compensation under a certificate of public convenience and necessity issued pursuant to the laws of this State, the United States, or any foreign government. This exemption is in addition to the exemptions provided in Sections 6366 and 6366.1 of the Revenue and Taxation Code of the State of California.

3. If the purchaser is obligated to purchase the property for a fixed price pursuant to a contract entered into prior to the operative date of this chapter.

4. If the possession of, or the exercise of any right or power over, the tangible personal property arises under a lease which is a continuing purchase of such property for any period of time for which the lessee is obligated to lease the property for an amount fixed by a lease prior to the operative date of this chapter.

5. For the purposes of subparagraphs (3) and (4) of this section, storage, use, or other consumption, or possession of, or exercise of any right or power over, tangible personal property shall be deemed not to be obligated pursuant to a contract or lease for any period of time for which any party to the contract or lease has the unconditional right to terminate the contract or lease upon notice, whether or not such right is exercised.

6. Except as provided in subparagraph (7), a retailer engaged in business in the City shall not be required to collect use tax from the purchaser of tangible personal property, unless the retailer ships or delivers the property into the City or participates within the City in making the sale of the property, including, but not limited to, soliciting or receiving the order, either directly or indirectly, at a place of business of the retailer in the City or through any representative, agent, canvasser, solicitor, subsidiary, or person in the City under the authority of the retailer.

7. "A retailer engaged in business in the City" shall also include any retailer of any of the following: vehicles subject to registration pursuant to Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 4000) of Division 3 of the Vehicle Code,

aircraft licensed in compliance with Section 21411 of the Public Utilities Code, or undocumented vessels registered under Division 3.5 (commencing with Section 9840) of the Vehicle Code. That retailer shall be required to collect use tax from any purchaser who registers or licenses the vehicle, vessel, or aircraft at an address in the City.

D. Any person subject to use tax under this chapter may credit against that tax any transactions tax or reimbursement for transactions tax paid to a district imposing, or retailer liable for a transactions tax pursuant to Part 1.6 of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code with respect to the sale to the person of the property the storage, use or other consumption of which is subject to the use tax.

Section 3.09.120. AMENDMENTS. All amendments subsequent to the effective date of this chapter to Part 1 of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code relating to sales and use taxes and which are not inconsistent with Part 1.6 and Part 1.7 of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, and all amendments to Part 1.6 and Part 1.7 of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, shall automatically become a part of this chapter, provided however, that no such amendment shall operate so as to affect the rate of tax imposed by this chapter.

Section 3.09.130. ENJOINING COLLECTION FORBIDDEN. No injunction or writ of mandate or other legal or equitable process shall issue in any suit, action or proceeding in any court against the State or the City, or against any officer of the State or the City, to prevent or enjoin the collection under this chapter, or Part 1.6 of Division 2 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, of any tax or any amount of tax required to be collected.

Section 3.09.140. SEVERABILITY. If any provision of this chapter or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the chapter and the application of such provision to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

Section 3.09.150. EFFECTIVE DATE. This chapter and the ordinance enacting it relates to the levying and collecting of the City transactions and use taxes and shall take effect immediately.

Section 3.09.160. CITIZEN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE. The City shall empanel a Citizen's Oversight Committee to review and report on the revenue and expenditure from funds raised under the tax adopted by this chapter.

Section 3.09.170. ANNUAL INDEPENDENT AUDITS. The City shall ensure that annual independent audits are conducted to account for the tax revenues received and expenditures made in relation to the one percent (1%) transaction and use tax. Such audits will be provided to the Citizens' Oversight Committee for their review.

The foregoing Ordinance was passed by the City Council of the City of Garden Grove on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of November 2018.

ATTEST: /s/ STEVEN R. JONES  
MAYOR

/s/ TERESA POMEROY, CMC  
CITY CLERK

STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
COUNTY OF ORANGE ) SS:  
CITY OF GARDEN GROVE )

I, TERESA POMEROY, City Clerk of the City of Garden Grove, do hereby certify that the foregoing Ordinance was introduced for first reading and passed to second reading on November 13, 2018, with a vote as follows:

AYES: COUNCIL MEMBERS: (7) BEARD, O'NEILL, NGUYEN T., BUI,  
KLOPFENSTEIN, NGUYEN K., JONES  
NOES: COUNCIL MEMBERS: (0) NONE  
ABSENT: COUNCIL MEMBERS: (0) NONE

and was passed on November 27, 2018, by the following vote:

AYES: COUNCIL MEMBERS: (7) BEARD, O'NEILL, NGUYEN T., BUI,  
KLOPFENSTEIN, NGUYEN K., JONES  
NOES: COUNCIL MEMBERS: (0) NONE  
ABSENT: COUNCIL MEMBERS: (0) NONE

/s/ TERESA POMEROY, CMC  
CITY CLERK



# MEASURE O CITIZEN'S OVERSIGHT BOARD COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING

JULY 22, 2019



GARDEN GROVE



## Important Facts

- On November 6, 2018, Garden Grove Voters passed Ordinance No. 2897, known as Measure O, imposing a one-cent (1%) transaction and use (sales) tax.
- Collection of the one-cent local sales tax began on April 1, 2019.
- Measure O is subject to a clear system of accountability, with the oversight of an independent committee.

# Agenda

- Selection of Chair and Vice Chair
  - Overview of Brown Act
    - Code of Ethics
    - Harassment Training
  - Committee Purpose and Responsibilities
- Fiscal Years 2019-21 Budget Overview
  - Next Meeting Topics

# COMMITTEE PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

RESOLUTION NO. 9540-19

## Purpose

*Provide citizen oversight of Measure O's funds, to ensure all funds are spent properly*

## Responsibilities

- Review General Fund Budget;
- Review Comprehensive Annual Financial Report; and
- Communicate Review Findings Annually to the City Council during public meeting.

## City Budget in a Nutshell

- The City's fiscal year begins July 1 and ends June 30.
- Through a public process, the Adopted Budget commits financial resources to a myriad of services and programs that the City provides.
- Funding commitments reflect the priorities of the City and the direction of its future.

## Basis of Accounting and Budgeting

- Accounts of the City are organized on the basis of funds, each of which is considered a separate accounting entity.
- The City collects and records revenues and expenses within the following categories: Governmental Funds, Proprietary Funds, and Fiduciary Funds.
- The General Fund is the chief operating fund and accounts for most City programs and services which are supported by general tax revenues and fees.
- Measure O funds are reported in the General Fund.

# UNDERSTANDING THE CITY'S BUDGET

# FISCAL YEARS 2019-21 GENERAL FUND BUDGET



# FY2019-21 General Fund Budget at a Glance



FY 19-20 \$134.2M

FY2020-21 \$137.0M



FY 19-20 \$126.9M

FY2020-21 \$132.4M

	FY2019-20 (\$'000)	FY2020-21 (\$'000)	Change
Sales Tax	\$ 22,668	\$ 23,006	1.5%
<b>Measure O</b>	<b>19,000</b>	<b>19,285</b>	1.5%
Property Tax	46,965	48,385	3.0%
Transient Occupancy Tax	26,477	27,007	2.0%
Business Tax	2,500	2,500	0.0%
Franchise Fee	2,500	2,500	0.0%
Building Permit & Other Fees	2,200	2,200	0.0%
Street Repair	2,484	2,516	1.3%
Deferred Municipal Support	3,422	3,422	0.0%
Other Income	5,964	6,175	3.5%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 134,180</b>	<b>\$ 136,996</b>	2.1%

	FY2019-20 (\$'000)	FY2020-21 (\$'000)	Change
Police	\$ 65,026	\$ 67,738	4.2%
Fire	27,748	29,149	5.0%
City Administration	3,114	3,354	7.7%
Finance	4,122	4,292	4.1%
Human Resources	1,396	1,483	6.2%
Information Technology	813	859	5.7%
Community & Economic Development	6,652	7,073	6.3%
Community Services	3,310	3,506	5.9%
Public Works	13,066	13,787	5.5%
Transfer Out	1,446	1,132	-21.7%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 126,693</b>	<b>\$ 132,373</b>	4.5%

# Budgeted Use of Measure O Funding – FY 2019-20

(\$ in '000)

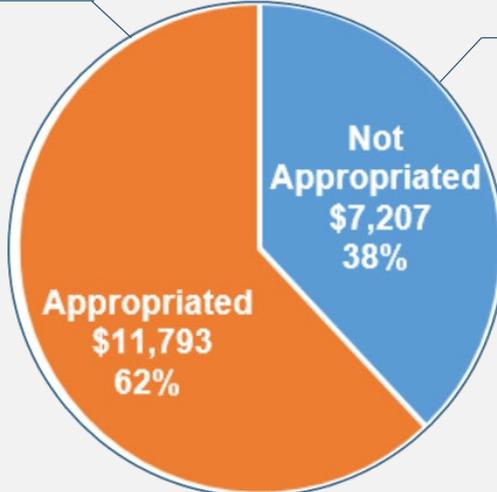
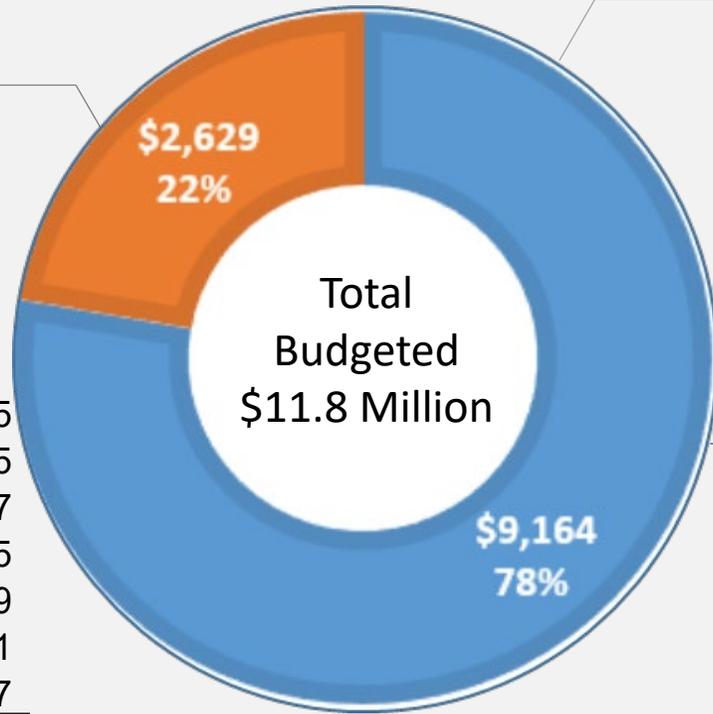


## Public Safety

OCFA Transition	\$ 1,720
Police Workforce Expansion	3,473
School Resource Officer Program Enhancement	206
Facility Assessment	150
Additional Training	45
Labor & Pension Cost Increase	3,570
	\$ 9,164

## Non-Public Safety

Financial Transparency Efforts	\$ 5
Compliance & Legal Services	205
BiGG/Revenue Enhancement Measures	807
Public Works Service/Contractual Increases	395
Community Partnership & Events	59
Service Level Enhancement	21
Labor & Pension Cost Increase	1,137
	\$ 2,629



## Projected Surplus (\$7.2 Million)

- Pension Liability Pay Down
- Rainy Day Fund

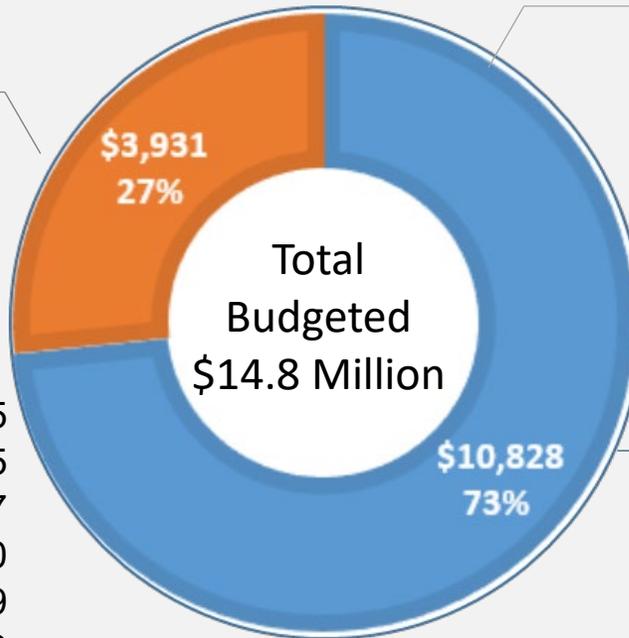
# Budgeted Use of Measure O Funding – FY 2020-21

(\$ in '000)



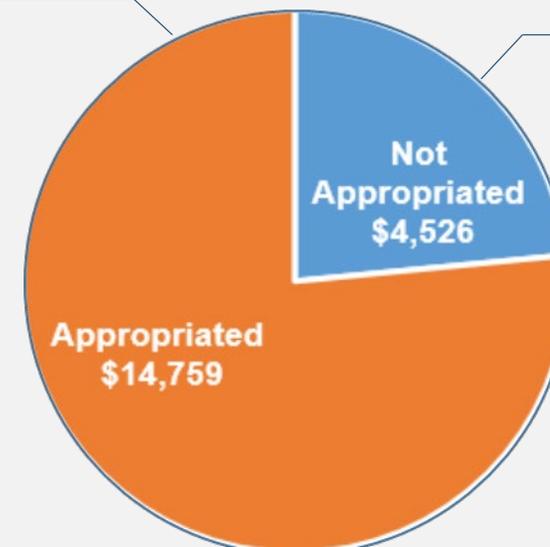
## Non-Public Safety

Financial Transparency Efforts	\$	25
Compliance & Legal Services		385
BiGG/Revenue Enhancement Measures		807
Public Works Service/Contractual Increases		630
Community Partnership & Events		59
Service Level Enhancement		169
Labor & Pension Cost Increase		1,856
		<u>\$ 3,931</u>



## Public Safety

OCFA Transition	\$	3,122
Police Workforce Expansion		3,236
School Resource Officer Program Enhancement		219
Facility Assessment		-
Additional Training		45
Labor & Pension Cost Increase		4,206
		<u>\$10,828</u>



## Projected Surplus (\$4.5 Million)

- Pension Liability Pay Down
- Rainy Day Fund



# Next Meeting

- Timing – January 21, 2020 (tentative)
  - Annual audited financial statement
  - Sales Tax information availability
- Topics:
  - Review of FY2018-19 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR)
  - Measure O Revenue and Expenditure Update

# THANK YOU



# **Measure O Committee Brown Act Presentation**

Garden Grove Measure O Committee

July 22, 2019

# The Brown Act

- Requirements for when a *majority* meets
- Public Notice Requirements
- Public Access and Participation

# Definition of “Meeting”

- “. . . any congregation of a majority of the members of a legislative body at the same time and location . . . to hear, discuss, deliberate or take action on any item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body.”

# Meetings Must be Public

- Majority Cannot Discuss the City's Business in Private
- “Serial” Meetings Prohibited
- Study Sessions and Workshops Included
- No Closed Sessions for Committee



# Exceptions

- Unilateral Written Communications to Legislative Body
- Separate Meetings with or Communications from Staff
- Individual Contacts with members of the public, media, City staff, etc.
- *But* Be Wary of Serial Meetings

# Exceptions

- *So long as majority of the members do not discuss among themselves business of a specific nature within Committee's jurisdiction – a majority can attend:*
  - Social/Ceremonial Events
  - Community Meetings that are open and publicized
  - Meetings of other Legislative Bodies
  - Conferences or similar gatherings open to the public

# Notice Requirements

- Agenda Must be Posted in Advance
- No Discussion of Non-Agenda Items
  - Limited Exceptions



AGENDA  
GARDEN GROVE TRAFFIC COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
March 05, 2019  
6:00 P.M.  
Community Meeting Center  
11300 STANFORD AVENUE

ROLL CALL: Arbgast, Cepeda, Dalton, Johnson, Lindsay, Klisk-Mohr, and Rodgers

Members of the public desiring to speak on any item of public interest, excluding any item on the agenda except Public Hearings, must do so during Oral Communications at the beginning of the meeting. Each speaker shall fill out a card stating name and address, to be presented to the Recording Secretary, and shall be limited to five (5) minutes. Members of the public wishing to address Public Hearing items shall do so at the time of the Public Hearing.

Any person requiring auxiliary aids and services due to a disability should contact the City Clerk's Office to arrange for special accommodations. (Government Code §54913.2).

All revised or additional documents and writings related to any items on the agenda, which are distributed to all or a majority of the Traffic Commission Commissioners within 72 hours of a meeting, shall be available for public inspection (1) at the Engineering Services Division during normal business hours; and (2) Community Meeting Center at the time of the meeting.

Agenda item descriptions are intended to give a brief, general description of the item to advise the public of the item's general nature. The Traffic Commission may take legislative action it deems appropriate with respect to the item and is not limited to the recommended action indicated in staff reports or the agenda.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SWEARING IN OF COMMISSIONERS

1. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – PUBLIC
2. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS
3. RECEIVE AND FILE MINUTES

September 04, 2018

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. Elect Chair and Vice Chair
- b. Code of Ethics
- c. Disabled Person On-Street Parking Requests
  - 14222 Buena St., Apt 5
  - 9552 Washington Ave., Apt 2
  - 13082 Allard Ave. Apt., A
  - 12834 Chapman Ave., Apt. 4
  - 9082 Central Ave., Apt B

# Exceptions

- May briefly respond to statements or questions from members of public
- May ask a question for clarification
- May make a brief announcement or report
- May provide Staff reference to info and/or request report back



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# Public Access and Participation

- Right to Attend, Observe and Record Meetings
- Right to View Documents / Public Records
- Right to Participate in Meeting
  - Right to speak on any item of interest within Committee's subject matter jurisdiction (Oral Communications)
  - Right to speak on any specific item of business before or during Committee's consideration (Public Hearings)

# Penalties

- Void actions
- Intentional Violations are misdemeanors
- AG/DA Enforcement
- Civil Enforcement—Attorney's Fees

# Questions?

- Contacts for Future Questions
  - Omar Sandoval (City Attorney)
    - (714) 741-5368
    - [omars@ggcity.org](mailto:omars@ggcity.org)
  - James Eggart (Assistant City Attorney)
    - (714) 415-1062
    - [jamese@ggcity.org](mailto:jamese@ggcity.org)