

School Board

Types of School Board Meetings¹

General

For all meetings of the School Board and its committees, the Superintendent or designee shall satisfy all notice and posting requirements contained herein as well as in the Open Meetings Act (OMA). This shall include mailing meeting notifications to news media that have officially requested them and to others as approved by the Board.² Unless otherwise specified, all meetings are held in the District's main office.³ Board policy 2:220, *School Board Meeting Procedure*, governs meeting quorum requirements.

The Superintendent is designated on behalf of the Board and each Board committee to receive the training on compliance with OMA that is required by Section 1.05(a) of that Act. The Superintendent may identify other employees to receive the training.⁴ In addition, each Board member must complete a course of training on OMA as required by Section 1.05(b) or (c) of that Act.⁵

The footnotes are not intended to be part of the adopted policy; they should be removed before the policy is adopted.

¹ State law controls this policy's content. The provisions of the Open Meetings Act (OMA) do not apply to collective bargaining negotiations, including negotiating team strategy sessions, and grievance arbitrations as provided in 115 ILCS 5/18.

² 5 ILCS 120/2.02. These responsibilities may be given to anyone.

³ State law requires that meetings be held in a location convenient and open to the public and no open meeting is allowed to be held on a legal holiday unless the regular meeting day falls on that holiday. 5 ILCS 120/2.01. Regular and special meetings also may not be held or scheduled on the day of a general primary election, a general election, a consolidated primary election, or a consolidated election, as defined in the Election Code. 5 ILCS 120/2.07(a), added by P.A. 104-438. According to an Ill. Atty. Gen. Public Access Counselor Opinion (PAO), a board may not meet in a private residence because it would not be convenient and open to the public. PAO 12-8. A board meeting 26 miles away from its regular location, while open to the public, was inconvenient because "the public, as a practical matter, would be deterred from attending it." PAO 13-14. Generally, a board must also plan to accommodate a greater number of meeting attendees if it is aware of heightened interest in a meeting. PAO 25-11. Any person may record an open meeting. 5 ILCS 120/2.05. See sample policy 2:220, *School Board Meeting Procedure*.

⁴ Each board must designate at least one employee or member to receive training on compliance with OMA. 5 ILCS 120/1.05. Revise this paragraph if the board designates other individual(s) to receive the training. A list of designated individual(s) must be submitted to the Ill. Atty. Gen. Public Access Counselor (PAC). The designated individual(s) must successfully complete an electronic training curriculum administered by the PAC within 30 days after that designation, and thereafter must successfully complete an annual training program. OMA does not specify duties for the designated individuals who receive the training but presumably they would assist the board in its OMA compliance efforts.

⁵ 5 ILCS 120/1.05(b) applies to training administered by the Ill. Atty. Gen. Office; 1.05(c) applies to training administered by IASB. Board members elected or appointed after 1-1-12 must complete the training not later than 90 days after taking the oath of office. Even before this law, compliance with OMA has always been considered a shared responsibility of board members. Failing to complete OMA training does not affect the validity of an action taken by the board nor is it considered a criminal violation. 5 ILCS 120/1.05(b) and 120/4. However, a person found to have violated any other provisions of OMA is guilty of a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a \$1,500 fine and/or 30 days in jail. 5 ILCS 120/4.

Regular Meetings

The Board announces the time and place for its regular meetings at the beginning of each fiscal year.⁶ The Superintendent shall prepare and make available the calendar of regular Board meetings. The regular meeting calendar may be changed with 10 days' notice in accordance with State law.⁷

A meeting agenda shall be posted at the District's main office and the Board's meeting room, or other location where the meeting is to be held, at least 48 hours before the meeting.⁸

Closed Meetings⁹

The Board and Board committees may meet in a closed meeting to consider the following subjects:

1. The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or specific volunteers of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor in a park, recreational, or educational setting, or a volunteer of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.¹⁰ However, a meeting to consider an increase in compensation to a specific employee of a public body that is subject to the Local Government Wage Increase

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⁶ OMA and the School Code have different provisions regarding the establishment of a regular meeting schedule. OMA requires each public body to prepare and make available a regular meeting schedule at the beginning of each calendar or fiscal year. 5 ILCS 120/2.03. The School Code states that this task is accomplished during the organizational meeting. By *announcing* the schedule at the beginning of each calendar or fiscal year and by *fixing* the schedule at the organizational meeting, a board can implement both laws. Note that the phrase in this sample policy, "at the beginning of each fiscal year," can be changed to "at the beginning of each calendar year."

⁷ Regular meeting dates may be changed by giving at least 10 days' notice in a newspaper of general circulation and posting a notice at the district's main office. 5 ILCS 120/2.03. Districts with a population of less than 500, in which no newspaper is published, may give the 10 days' notice by posting a notice in at least three prominent places within the district, in addition to posting a notice at the district's main office. *Id.* Notice shall also be given to those news media having filed an annual request to receive notifications. *Id.* The 10 days' notice requirement does not apply to the rescheduling of a single meeting if the regular meeting schedule is otherwise maintained. See PAO 24-13 and f/n 17, below.

⁸ 5 ILCS 120/2.02(a). The posting location may need modification to comply with the law's requirement that the agenda be posted at the district's main office. For agenda requirements, see sample policy 2:220, *School Board Meeting Procedure*.

OMA also requires that "any requested notice and agenda for the meeting be continuously available for public review during the entire 48-hour period preceding the meeting." 5 ILCS 120/2.02(c). The requirement for continuously available is satisfied if the district posts any required notice and agenda on its website. However, to comply with the legislative intent, posting on the district website does not replace the posting described in this sentence. See Rep. Pihos' remarks reported in *New open-meetings law; is hard-copy posting of agendas still required?*, Sept. 2012, Illinois Bar Journal.

For districts that do not post board meeting agendas on a website (because they do not have a website maintained by a full-time staff member), add the following sentence:

The agenda shall be continuously available for public review during the entire 48-hour period preceding the meeting. If a notice or agenda is not continuously available for the full 48-hour period due to actions outside of the district's control, the lack of availability does not invalidate any meeting or action taken.

⁹ 5 ILCS 120/2(c), amended by P.A. 103-311. The reasons for closed meetings are frequently addressed in court decisions and Ill. Atty. Gen. opinions; only a few of these decisions/opinions are mentioned in the footnotes.

¹⁰ "Th[is] exception is not intended to allow private discussion of fiscal matters, notwithstanding that they may directly or indirectly impact the employees of the public body." See PAOs 12-11 and 15-03. Discussing the elimination of an employee's position for reasons unrelated to the performance of the employee is not within the scope of Section 2(c)(1). See PAO 15-07. Nor does the exception permit a public body to hold closed sessions to discuss employees in general or issues that may ultimately have an impact on employees. See PAOs 15-05, 16-13, and 18-12.

Transparency Act may not be closed and shall be open to the public and posted and held in accordance with [OMA]. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1). ¹¹

2. Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2). ¹²
3. The selection of a person to fill a public office, as defined in OMA, including a vacancy in a public office, when the public body is given power to appoint under law or ordinance, or the discipline, performance or removal of the occupant of a public office, when the public body is given power to remove the occupant under law or ordinance. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(3).
4. Evidence or testimony presented in open hearing, or in closed hearing where specifically authorized by law, to a quasi-adjudicative body, as defined in OMA, provided that the body prepares and makes available for public inspection a written decision setting forth its determinative reasoning. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(4).
5. Evidence or testimony presented to the Board regarding denial of admission to school events or property pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/24-24, provided that the Board prepares and makes available for public inspection a written decision setting forth its determinative reasoning. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(4.5).
6. The purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body, including meetings held for the purpose of discussing whether a particular parcel should be acquired. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(5).
7. The setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the public body. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(6).
8. The sale or purchase of securities, investments, or investment contracts. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(7).
9. Security procedures, school building safety and security, and the use of personnel and equipment to respond to an actual, a threatened, or a reasonably potential danger to the safety of employees, students, staff, the public, or public property. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(8).
10. Student disciplinary cases. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(9).
11. The placement of individual students in special education programs and other matters relating to individual students. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(10).

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¹¹ The Local Government Wage Increase Transparency Act, 50 ILCS 155/, allows *disclosable payments* (described below) to Ill. Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) employees only when the school board has first discussed the specific payment to be made at a meeting open to the public and posted and held in accordance with the requirements of OMA. 50 ILCS 155/5.

The provisions apply only to disclosable payments made to participating employees under Article Seven of the Ill. Pension Code (IMRF) who began participation before 1-1-11 and who are not subject to a collective bargaining agreement with respect to the employment upon which the participation is based.

Disclosable payments means a payment, whether in the form of an increase in the rate of earnings or a lump-sum payment, that would:

1. Be made by a participating employer to a participating employee after the employee has expressed to the employer his or her intent to retire or withdraw from service;
2. Have the effect of increasing the employee's reportable monthly earnings from that employer by more than 6% compared to the previous month; and
3. Be made between 12 months and 90 days prior to the employee's expected termination of service.

A disclosable payment also includes payment for accumulated sick leave; it does not include a refund of contributions or any payment required to be paid by State or federal law.

¹² Discussing a hiring freeze is not within the scope of Section 2(c)(2). See PAO 15-07. And if a public body is not engaged in collective bargaining at the time of the meeting, discussion of a hiring freeze does not constitute a collective negotiating matter. *Id.*

12. Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular public body has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the public body finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the minutes of the closed meeting. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).
13. The establishment of reserves or settlement of claims as provided in the Local Governmental and Governmental Employees Tort Immunity Act, if otherwise the disposition of a claim or potential claim might be prejudiced, or the review or discussion of claims, loss or risk management information, records, data, advice or communications from or with respect to any insurer of the public body or any intergovernmental risk management association or self insurance pool of which the public body is a member. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(12).
14. Self evaluation, practices and procedures, or professional ethics, when meeting with a representative of a statewide association of which the public body is a member. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(16). ¹³
15. Discussion of minutes of meetings lawfully closed under OMA, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21).
16. Meetings between internal or external auditors and governmental audit committees, finance committees, and their equivalents, when the discussion involves internal control weaknesses, identification of potential fraud risk areas, known or suspected frauds, and fraud interviews conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards of the United States of America. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(29).

The Board may hold a closed meeting, or close a portion of a meeting, by a majority vote of a quorum, taken at an open meeting. The vote of each Board member present, and the reason for the closed meeting, will be publicly disclosed at the time of the meeting and clearly stated in the motion and the meeting minutes. ¹⁴

A single motion calling for a series of closed meetings may be adopted when such meetings will involve the same particular matters and are scheduled to be held within three months of the vote. ¹⁵

No final Board action will be taken at a closed meeting. ¹⁶

Reconvened or Rescheduled Meetings

A meeting may be rescheduled or reconvened. Public notice of a rescheduled or reconvened meeting shall be given in the same manner as that for a special meeting, except that no public notice is required

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¹³ IASB Outreach and Training directors are available to facilitate a board self-evaluation.

¹⁴ 5 ILCS 120/2a. Provided the open meeting was properly noticed, no additional notice is required to close the meeting. A motion to close a meeting can be as simple as, "I move that the Board hold [go into] a closed session to discuss [state one of the closed meeting grounds with reference to the specific section authorizing the closed meeting]."

The adequacy of a motion to go into closed session was discussed in Henry v. Anderson and Champaign Community Unit School Dist. No. 4, 356 Ill.App.3d 952 (4th Dist. 2005). A statutory citation is not required in the motion to go into closed session, but OMA does require a reference to the specific exception.

The *litigation* exception can be challenging. If the litigation has been filed and is pending, the motion to go into closed session need only state that the board will discuss litigation that has been filed and is pending. If the litigation has not been filed, the board must: (1) find that the litigation is probable or imminent, and (2) record and enter into the closed session minutes the basis for that finding. 5 ILCS 120/2. See City of Bloomington v. Raoul, 184 N.E.3d 366 (Ill. App. 4th Dist. 2021) (finding city council improperly invoked litigation exception to justify closed session); PAO 21-03.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ 5 ILCS 120/2(e). See also PAOs 13-03, 13-07, 14-01, and 24-03.

when the original meeting is open to the public and: (1) is to be reconvened within 24 hours, or (2) an announcement of the time and place of the reconvened meeting was made at the original meeting and there is no change in the agenda. ¹⁷

Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called by the President or by any three members of the Board by giving notice thereof, in writing, stating the time, place, and purpose of the meeting to remaining Board members by mail at least 48 hours before the meeting, or by personal service at least 24 hours before the meeting. ¹⁸

Public notice of a special meeting is given by posting a notice at the District's main office at least 48 hours before the meeting and by notifying the news media that have filed a written request for notice. A meeting agenda shall accompany the notice. ¹⁹

All matters discussed by the Board at any special meeting must be related to a subject on the meeting agenda. ²⁰

Emergency Meetings

Public notice of emergency meetings shall be given as soon as practical, but in any event, before the meeting to news media that have filed a written request for notice. ²¹

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¹⁷ 5 ILCS 120/2.02.

¹⁸ 105 ILCS 5/10-16 (two members of a board of directors; 105 ILCS 5/10-6). Lawyers disagree whether three members may call a special meeting without violating OMA, although there is general agreement that no violation occurs if three members call a special meeting while they are participating in a lawful board committee meeting with the matter on the agenda.

¹⁹ 5 ILCS 120/2.02. News media that gave the board an address or telephone number within the district's territorial jurisdiction must be given notice in the same manner as given board members.

OMA requires that "any required notice and agenda be *continuously available* for public viewing during the entire 48-hour period preceding the meeting." 5 ILCS 120/2.02(c) (emphasis added). The requirement for *continuously available* is satisfied if the district posts any required notice and agenda on its website. Posting on the district website does not replace the posting described in this paragraph. See f/n 8.

For districts that do not post board meeting notices and agendas on a website (because they do not have a website maintained by a full-time staff member), add the following sentence:

The notice and agenda shall be continuously available for public review during the entire 48-hour period preceding the meeting.

Some attorneys find OMA's posting requirements for special meetings to be unclear and recommend that a board post notices and agendas of such meetings at the district's main office *and* at the location where the meeting is to be held. Consult the board attorney for guidance on this issue and ensure that posting practices align with this policy and administrative procedure 2:200-AP, *Types of School Board Meetings*. Posting at the meeting location promotes greater transparency. Boards that post public notices and agendas of special meetings at the meeting location may revise this sentence as follows:

Public notice of a special meeting is given by posting a notice at the District's main office and the location where the meeting is to be held at least 48 hours before the meeting and by notifying the news media that have filed a written request for notice.

Note that if this alternative language is used, this sample policy requires posting in the same manner for reconvened and rescheduled meetings in alignment with OMA; see the **Reconvened or Rescheduled Meetings** subhead.

²⁰ Lawyers disagree whether OMA mandates this restriction, i.e., whether it restricts board *discussions* to items related to an item on the special meeting agenda. OMA limits board *action* to items on the agenda (5 ILCS 120/2.02(c)); it states that the validity of any action taken "which is germane to a subject on the agenda shall not be affected by other errors or omissions in the agenda." 5 ILCS 120/2.02(a). For agenda requirements, see sample policy 2:220, *School Board Meeting Procedure*.

²¹ 5 ILCS 120/2.02(a).

Posting on the District Website ²²

In addition to the other notices specified in this policy, the Superintendent or designee shall post the following on the District website: (1) the annual schedule of regular meetings, which shall remain posted until the Board approves a new schedule of regular meetings; (2) a public notice of all Board meetings; and (3) the agenda for each meeting which shall remain posted until the meeting is concluded.

LEGAL REF.: 5 ILCS 120/, Open Meetings Act.
5 ILCS 140/, Freedom of Information Act.
105 ILCS 5/10-6 and 5/10-16.

CROSS REF.: 2:110 (Qualifications, Term, and Duties of Board Officers), 2:120 (Board Member Development), 2:210 (Organizational School Board Meeting), 2:220 (School Board Meeting Procedure), 2:230 (Public Participation at School Board Meetings and Petitions to the Board), 6:235 (Access to Electronic Networks), 8:30 (Visitors to and Conduct on School Property)

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²² Required *only if* the district has a website that is maintained by a full-time staff member; if not, this section may be omitted. 5 ILCS 120/2.02. Note that 5 ILCS 120/2.02(b) requires that a notice of *all* meetings be posted on the district website, but only notices of *regular* meetings must remain posted until the *regular* meeting is concluded. As this is an obvious oversight, it is wise to leave the notice of every meeting on the website until after the meeting occurred. The agenda must remain on the district website until the meeting is concluded. Id.