

2010 -- H 7626

LC01987

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2010

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT - OPEN MEETINGS - SCHOOL COMMITTEES

Introduced By: Representative Brian C. Newberry

Date Introduced: February 25, 2010

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 42-46-6 of the General Laws in Chapter 42-46 entitled "Open
2 Meetings" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **42-46-6. Notice.** -- (a) All public bodies shall give written notice of their regularly
4 scheduled meetings at the beginning of each calendar year. The notice shall include the dates,
5 times, and places of the meetings and shall be provided to members of the public upon request
6 and to the secretary of state at the beginning of each calendar year in accordance with subsection
7 (f).

8 (b) Public bodies shall give supplemental written public notice of any meeting within a
9 minimum of forty-eight (48) hours before the date. This notice shall include the date the notice
10 was posted, the date, time and place of the meeting, and a statement specifying the nature of the
11 business to be discussed. Copies of the notice shall be maintained by the public body for a
12 minimum of one year. Nothing contained herein shall prevent a public body, other than a school
13 committee, from adding additional items to the agenda by majority vote of the members. School
14 committees may, however, add items for informational purposes only, pursuant to a request,
15 submitted in writing, by a member of the public during the public comment session of the school
16 committee's meetings. Said informational items may not be voted upon unless they have been
17 posted in accordance with the provisions of this section. Such additional items shall be for
18 informational purposes only and may not be voted on except where necessary to address an

1 unexpected occurrence that requires immediate action to protect the public or to refer the matter
2 to an appropriate committee or to another body or official.

3 (c) Written public notice shall include, but need not be limited to, posting a copy of the
4 notice at the principal office of the public body holding the meeting, or if no principal office
5 exists, at the building in which the meeting is to be held, and in at least one other prominent place
6 within the governmental unit, and electronic filing of the notice with the secretary of state
7 pursuant to subsection (f); provided, that in the case of school committees the required public
8 notice ~~shall be~~ requirement shall be met either by being published electronically or on an official
9 website maintained by the school committee or the city or town thereof, and/or by being
10 published in a newspaper of general circulation in the school district under the committee's
11 jurisdiction; publication in either a newspaper and/or the electronic format as aforesaid shall be
12 sufficient. Provided, this provision shall not be construed to prevent a school committee from
13 publishing the required notice in both a newspaper and in an electronic format, and that if the
14 electronic format is exclusively used, the agenda shall be posted in a conspicuous manner and
15 placement in each public school in the district. Provided, further; ~~however, that~~ ad hoc
16 committees, sub committees and advisory committees of school committees shall not be required
17 to publish notice in a newspaper; and/or in an electronic format as aforesaid; however, nothing
18 contained herein shall prevent a public body from holding an emergency meeting, upon an
19 affirmative vote of the majority of the members of the body when the meeting is deemed
20 necessary to address an unexpected occurrence that requires immediate action to protect the
21 public. If an emergency meeting is called, a meeting notice and agenda shall be posted as soon as
22 practicable and shall be electronically filed with the secretary of state pursuant to subsection (e)
23 and, upon meeting, the public body shall state for the record and minutes why the matter must be
24 addressed in less than forty-eight (48) hours and only discuss the issue or issues which created the
25 need for an emergency meeting. Nothing contained herein shall be used in the circumvention of
26 the spirit and requirements of this chapter.

27 (d) Nothing within this chapter shall prohibit any public body, or the members thereof,
28 from responding to comments initiated by a member of the public during a properly noticed open
29 forum even if the subject matter of a citizen's comments or discussions were not previously
30 posted, provided such matters shall be for informational purposes only and may not be voted on
31 except where necessary to address an unexpected occurrence that requires immediate action to
32 protect the public or to refer the matter to an appropriate committee or to another body or official.
33 Nothing contained in this chapter requires any public body to hold an open forum session, to
34 entertain or respond to any topic nor does it prohibit any public body from limiting comment on

1 any topic at such an open forum session. No public body, or the members thereof, may use this
2 section to circumvent the spirit or requirements of this chapter.

3 (e) A school committee may add agenda items not appearing in the published notice
4 required by this section under the following conditions:

5 (1) The revised agenda is electronically filed with the secretary of state pursuant to
6 subsection (f), and is posted on the school district's website and the two (2) public locations
7 required by this section at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting;

8 (2) The new agenda items were unexpected and could not have been added in time for
9 newspaper publication;

10 (3) Upon meeting, the public body states for the record and minutes why the agenda
11 items could not have been added in time for newspaper publication and need to be addressed at
12 the meeting;

13 (4) A formal process is available to provide timely notice of the revised agenda to any
14 person who has requested that notice, and the school district has taken reasonable steps to make
15 the public aware of this process; and

16 (5) The published notice shall include a statement that any changes in the agenda will be
17 posted on the school district's web site and the two (2) public locations required by this section
18 and will be electronically filed with the secretary of state at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance
19 of the meeting.

20 (f) All notices required by this section to be filed with the secretary of state shall be
21 electronically transmitted to the secretary of state in accordance with rules and regulations which
22 shall be promulgated by the secretary of state. This requirement of the electronic transmission and
23 filing of notices with the secretary of state shall take effect one year after this subsection takes
24 effect.

25 (g) If a public body fails to transmit notices in accordance with this section, then any
26 aggrieved person may file a complaint with the attorney general in accordance with section 42-
27 46-8.

28 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT - OPEN MEETINGS - SCHOOL
COMMITTEES

- 1 This act would amend the open meetings law by permitting school committees to satisfy
- 2 the publication requirements regarding their meetings through publication on a website
- 3 maintained by the school committee or by publication in a newspaper.
- 4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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