

Freedom of Information Meeting & Minute Guidelines for Boards/Commissions

1. What is a public meeting? What is a public record?

A public meeting is any hearing or other proceeding of your body, or gathering of, or communication by a quorum of your body to discuss or act upon any matters over which your body has authority. Public meetings must be open to the public, except in limited situations. Board members are cautioned against conducting any business via email, phone or in person, even just between 2 members, as that may be perceived as a meeting.

Pursuant to CGS 1-200, a public record means any recorded data or information relating to the conduct of the public's business prepared, owned, used, received or retained by a public agency, or to which a public agency is entitled to receive a copy by law or contract under section 1-218, whether such data or information be handwritten, typed, tape-recorded, printed, photostated, photographed or recorded by any other method. Please note: all electronic messages are public record, including, but not limited to, facsimiles, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging and voice mail.

2. What constitutes a quorum?

A quorum is when at least half of your voting members are present. Any official action (votes) cannot occur without a quorum present at your meeting.

3. What is a regular meeting? What is a special meeting? What is an emergency meeting?

Your board, commission or committee is required to submit its regular meeting schedule for each calendar year to the Town Clerk's office by January 31st of each year. A special meeting is any meeting that may be held in addition to that list, for whatever reason. An emergency meeting (and it must really be an emergency) may be held without complying with the preceding notice requirements. However, the agency must file its minutes, including the reason for the emergency, within 72 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) of the meeting with the Town Clerk's office.

4. Is an agenda required for every meeting? Where and when should it be posted? What about cancellations?

Every public meeting requires an agenda. Meeting agendas (whether a regular meeting or a special meeting) must be posted at least 24 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) before the meeting. There are no restrictions on maximum time. These agendas must be filed with the Town Clerk and also may be posted on the Town's website. Posting agendas (and minutes) on the website is not a requirement (Per CT SS Sec1-225), however we do try to post for the convenience of the public. Boards or Commissions may also be required to send a notice of its meetings at least 1 week prior to the meeting date to any person who has made a written request for such notice. A reasonable fee may be charged for this service. If a meeting is cancelled, notice of the cancellation must be provided to the Town Clerk. If a meeting is cancelled at the last minute due to weather or illness, every effort should be made to post a notice on the door of the building where the meeting was to have been held.

5. What needs to be included on an agenda?

Agendas should include the name of the board or commission, the meeting time, date & location, the matters that your body will discuss and/or take action upon, and any public hearings or executive sessions and the reason for it being held. The new and old business sections must contain a general description of the business that will be addressed. Simply stating "old or new business" without any detail is insufficient.

6. Can items be added to an agenda?

Yes and No. Items can be added to a regular meeting agenda by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of your members present. Items may NOT be added to a special meeting agenda.

7. What are the requirements for filing minutes? What should be included in the minutes?

Any votes made at a meeting must be available to the public within 3 calendar days of the meeting. Meeting minutes for regular and special meetings should be available in the agency's office, if there is one, or submitted to the Town Clerk within seven (7) calendar days from when the meeting occurred. Emergency meeting minutes must be filed within 72 hours of the meeting.

The minutes must contain: the name of the Board or Commission, the date, time and place of the meeting, the kind of meeting (special or regular etc), who was in attendance, whether the minutes of the previous meeting were approved, the record of each member's vote on any issue before the agency, all main motions and their status, all elections, the names of movers of important motions and the time the meeting adjourned. The secretary should also sign the minutes. Meeting minutes will be posted on the Town's website for the public's convenience as quickly as they can. Please keep in mind that meeting minutes will become a permanent record in the Town Clerk's office so every effort should be made for the submitted minutes to be clear and legible.

8. What is an Executive Session? What matters can be discussed in Executive Session?

By two-thirds vote of members present, your body may enter into an executive session. (at a regular meeting or a special meeting if it is on the agenda) Executive sessions are closed to the public, but your body may decide to include individuals needed to provide technical advice or testimony to your board on the reason for the session, but only for the time period of said testimony or advice. No action (votes) should be taken while in executive session. Your meeting minutes for that part of the executive session should only reflect: the vote to enter into executive session, the time the session began, the people present at the session, the time the session concluded and the public meeting reconvened. Any votes taken on that matter must be voted on after the executive session has ended. Matters eligible to be discussed in executive session include personnel search committees or employee matters, strategy & negotiations regarding pending claims and potential litigation, caucuses, security matters, real estate acquisitions, or matters that would result in disclosure of a public record that is exempted from disclosure requirements.

Please feel free to contact the Town Clerk if you have any questions regarding this.