

A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT

The Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA) was created in 1957 with the purpose of promoting free and open communication between government and citizens. The OMA, along with the Freedom of Information Act, determines what types of information citizens have access to and by what method. These laws put emphasis on open communication and access to information with few exceptions made. Please find below information intended to act as a basic guide for open meetings. Additional information may be found at the Illinois Attorney General's website or in consultation with the Village Clerk.

The OMA applies to all public bodies. This includes "all legislative, executive, administrative or advisory bodies of the state, counties, townships, cities, villages, incorporated towns, school districts and other municipal corporations, boards, bureaus, committees or commissions of this state..." This also includes committees and subcommittees of these public bodies.

- A "meeting" as subject to the OMA is "any gathering of a majority of a quorum of members of a public body held for the purpose of discussing public business."
 - This means if a public body has seven members, three would constitute a majority of a quorum of that body (four is quorum; three is a majority of a quorum).
 - The act is not intended to apply to chance meetings/social gatherings as these do not include the discussion of public business. However, if a *deliberation of public matters* were to begin at a chance meeting/social gathering, this would become a public meeting.
 - This act also applies to telephone conversations, online conversations or chats and email correspondence between members.
- The OMA requires notification be given for all meetings. This includes a yearly schedule of all regularly held meetings and the posting of an agenda at least 48 hours in advance.
- Minutes must be kept for all meetings and should include: date, time and location of meeting; members present or absent; and a summary of the discussion. The minutes are to be available for public inspection within seven days after the approval of the minutes.
- For certain topics, meetings may be closed. These include discussions of employment/appointment matters, legal matters, land acquisition, security/criminal matters, and a few miscellaneous exceptions.
 - The body must vote in open meeting to go into a closed session.
 - No votes may be taken in closed meetings.
 - A verbatim recording should be made of closed meetings. These recordings are to be kept confidential unless a question arises as to whether a meeting violated the OMA.