## **Municipal Division**

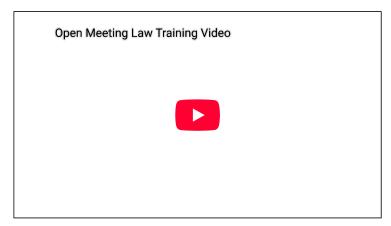
### https://sos.vermont.gov/municipal-division/open-meetings-

<u>Municipal Division</u> > Open Meetings

Quick Links	
Public Records	
Visit the Calendar Page	

# **Open Meetings**

The purpose of the Open Meeting Law is to ensure transparent and accountable government. Building on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Vermont Legislature has updated the Open Meeting Law with Act 133 (S.55) to recognize that hybrid and remote access to meetings can strengthen civic engagement and support transparent, efficient decision-making.



Beginning July 1, 2024, public bodies must comply with <u>Act 133 (S.55)</u>, which amends the Open Meeting Law as follows:

- Distinguishes among State and local "nonadvisory" and "advisory" bodies.
  - A "nonadvisory" body has supervision, control, or jurisdiction over legislative, quasi-judicial, tax, or budgetary matters. For ease of reference, SOS refers to nonadvisory bodies as decision-making bodies.
  - An "advisory" body does *not* have any of the above powers.
- Authorizes remote-only meetings for advisory public bodies, subject to remote public participation requirements, and for all public bodies under specified emergency circumstances (emergency meetings, declared states of emergency, and "local incidents").
- Beginning January 1, 2025, requires hybrid meetings for State decision-making (nonadvisory) bodies.
- Upon request, provides a limited right to local residents, the body's members, and the press for in-person or remote access to any regular meeting.
- Requires State and local decision-making (nonadvisory) bodies to
  electronically record meetings and post the recordings in a designated
  electronic location. (Includes similar requirements for certain informational
  meetings and hearings held in advance of a town's annual and special
  meetings of the voters.)
- Requires each municipality to post on its website, if it maintains or designates
  one, the procedures for filing an OML complaint and the text of the relevant
  statute, 1 V.S.A. § 314.
- Beginning January 1, 2025, requires annual OML training for State chairs of decision-making (nonadvisory) bodies and for local chairs of legislative bodies,

- municipal managers, and mayors. See the training video above.
- Establishes a workgroup, chaired by the Secretary of State, to recommend
  ways to improve access to and participation in meetings of public bodies,
  meetings of the voters, and elections.

You can read the text of Act 133 (S.55) here.

Joint guidance and FAQs from the Secretary of State, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and the Vermont School Boards Association is available <a href="https://example.com/here.c

The Secretary of State's Act 133 Recordkeeping Chart is available here.

Vermont's open meeting law requires all meetings of public bodies to be open to the public at all times, unless a specific exception applies. The purpose of the law is to promote transparency, accountability, and better decision-making in government.

In general, the open meeting law requires public bodies to:

- Provide advance public notice of meetings, including meeting agendas.
- Discuss all business and take all actions in open meeting, unless an exception in statute applies.
- Allow members of the public to attend and participate in meetings.
- Take meeting minutes and make them available to the public.

#### Secretary of State Resources:

- A Guide to Open Meetings (2019) (S.55 UPDATES COMING SOON)
- SOS Open Meeting Law training materials:
  - OML 2024 PowerPoint (long version)
  - o OML 2024 PowerPoint (short version)
- Joint Guidance/FAQ on 2024 Updates to Open Meeting Law (ACT 133): SOS, VLCT, and VSBA
- SOS Act 133 Recordkeeping Chart

#### Other Resources:

- Vermont Statutes Online: 1 V.S.A. §§ 310–314 (open meetings)
- Act 133 (S.55) of 2024 (effective July 1, 2024)
- Vermont Agency of Administration:
  - Calendar of State agency public meetings
  - <u>Public Meeting Request Form</u> (to post notice of State agency public meetings)
- Vermont League of Cities & Towns:
  - <u>Vermont's Open Meeting Law</u> publications and resources for local officials
- Robert's Rules of Order online
- <u>Rules of Procedure and Ethics Manual</u> (2005) (Vermont Land Use Training and Information Collaborative)
- Vermont Institute for Government
  - Born to Chair: An Introduction to the Science and Art of Chairing Board Meetings (2020)

Elections VSARA

## **OPR**

## **Contact Information**

### **Municipal Division**

Jenny R. Prosser General Counsel & Director 802-828-1027 jenny.prosser@vermont.gov

### **Records Officer**

Jenny Prosser, General Counsel **Submit Public Records Request** 

Visit the Calendar Page:





Vermont Statutes Online