

Your right to watch government work

City councils, town boards, county commissions, school boards and public trusts do the public's business in public. Here is what the law promises you.

THE PROMISE

Every meeting is yours

Oklahoma's policy is "to encourage and facilitate an informed citizenry's understanding of the governmental processes and governmental problems." [25 O.S. § 302](#) Meetings must be held at times and places convenient to the public and open to the public. [§ 303](#)

WHO MUST FOLLOW IT

Almost every public body

Governing bodies of cities and towns, county commissions, school boards, public trusts and authorities, state boards and commissions, and their committees and subcommittees. [§ 304\(1\)](#)

NO BACK ROOMS

No decisions by text or phone

A majority of members may not use informal gatherings, email, texts or phone calls to decide any action or take any vote. [§ 306](#)

NOTICE

You get warning before every meeting

Meeting	Notice the law requires
Regular	Yearly schedule filed by Dec. 15; agenda posted at least 24 hours ahead, not counting weekends or state holidays § 311(A)(1), (9), (10)
Special	Notice to the clerk 48 hours ahead and agenda posted 24 hours ahead, weekends and holidays excluded; only posted items may be considered § 311(A)(12)
Emergency	Only for injury to people, damage to property or immediate financial loss; as much notice as possible §§ 304(5), 311(A)(13)

You can ask to receive written notice of special meetings. The body may charge up to \$18 a year. [§ 311\(A\)\(12\)](#)

THE AGENDA

It must tell you what will happen

Agendas must "identify all items of business to be transacted." [§ 311\(B\)\(1\)](#) Courts require plain language. A deceptively vague agenda is a willful violation. [Haworth Bd. of Educ. v. Havens, 637 P.2d 902 \(Okla. Civ. App. 1981\)](#)

Good: "Discussion and possible action to approve a \$412,000 contract with ABC Paving for the 2027 street overlay program."
Not good enough: "Streets." "Other business."

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CLOSED DOORS

Executive session is the exception

A body may close a meeting only for purposes the law lists, such as an individual employee's hiring or discipline, buying or selling real property, or confidential advice from its attorney about a pending case. [25 O.S. § 307\(B\)](#)

- The agenda must say an executive session is proposed, identify the items and purposes, and cite the paragraph of § 307 that allows it. [§ 311\(B\)\(2\)](#)
- Members vote in public to go in, and that vote is recorded. [§ 307\(E\)\(2\)](#)
- Any vote on the matter happens back in open session. [§ 307\(E\)\(3\)](#)

ON THE RECORD

Every vote is public

Each member's vote must be publicly cast and recorded. No secret ballots. [§ 305](#) Minutes must show who was present and absent, everything considered and every action taken. [§ 312\(A\)](#)

BRING A CAMERA

You may record

Anyone attending may record the meeting by video, audio or any other means, as long as it does not interfere with the meeting. [§ 312\(C\)](#)

ONLINE MEETINGS

Videoconference rules

A quorum must be present in person at the posted site. Every remote site and the member at each must be on the agenda, every site is open to the public, and all votes are roll-call votes. [§ 307.1\(A\)](#)

SPEAKING UP

Public comment

The Act does not require a comment period. [2002 OK AG 26](#) When a body allows comment, the rules must be fair and the same for everyone, and criticism of officials is protected speech.

WHEN THE LAW IS BROKEN

What you can do

- Any action taken in willful violation is invalid. [§ 313](#)
- A willful violation is a misdemeanor: up to a \$500 fine, up to a year in jail, or both. Report it to the district attorney. [§ 314\(A\)](#)
- Any person may sue for declaratory or injunctive relief and recover attorney fees if successful. Talk to a lawyer first. [§ 314\(B\)](#)

Write it down. Save the agenda, the time it was posted, a recording and your notes. Facts make complaints work.

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