



**City of St. Helena
Water Advisory Board
Regular Meeting
Friday, April 30, 2021 @ 10:00 AM
Published: Tuesday, April 27, 2021 8:53 AM**

PLEASE NOTE: Any person who wishes to speak regarding an item on the agenda or make a comment under the "Oral Communication" portion of the agenda may do so, but please observe the time limit of four minutes.

In accordance with Executive Order N-29-20, and guidance from the California Department of Public Health on gatherings, remote public participation is allowed. We will address the Order in the following ways: Members of the public may not physically attend meetings. The Water Advisory Board meeting will be live-streamed on the City's website, barring technical difficulties. Those members of the public wishing to participate must do so remotely via Zoom electronic meetings in the following ways; by either logging onto the Zoom link located on the meeting agenda (please download the app to your computer or mobile device) and enter the meeting ID or by calling a listed number and enter the meeting ID. Public comment for Water Advisory Board meetings will be accepted via email to publiccomment@cityofstheleena.org. All public comments must be emailed by 4:00 PM prior to the meeting. Emailed public comments will not be read out loud but will be publicly available and attached to the on-line Water Advisory Board agenda.

In the event a quorum of the Water Advisory Board loses electrical power or suffers an internet connection outage that is not corrected within 10 minutes, the meeting will automatically be adjourned. Any items noticed as public hearings will be continued to the next regularly scheduled evening meeting of the Water Advisory Board. Any other items on the agenda that the Board has not taken action on will be placed on a future agenda.

Please see the end of the agenda for detailed PUBLIC PARTICIPATION instructions.

Please click the link below to join the meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85458295906>

Or One tap mobile :

US: +16699006833,,85458295906# or +12532158782,,85458295906#

Or Telephone:

Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 669 900 6833 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 929 205 6099 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 854 5829 5906

International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85458295906>

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1. CALL TO ORDER
2. ROLL CALL

City Council Representative: Anna Chouteau
Planning Commission Representative: Daniel Hale
Board Members: Dianna Ortiz, Brent Randol and George Schisler

3. PUBLIC FORUM:

An opportunity for the public to directly address the Board on items of interest to the public that are not listed on the agenda. Any person addressing the Board should provide his or her name and address, and limit comments to four minutes. Because of restrictions imposed by **the Brown Act, the Board may not engage in substantive discussion, nor take action on matters not described on the agenda.**

4. NEW BUSINESS:

- 4.1. Orientation – Overview of Brown Act and Review of Handbook for Committees, Commissions and Boards 5 - 170
Prepared By: Cindy Tzaferopoulos, City Clerk
[Brown Act Training](#)
[Handbook for Committees Commissions and Boards](#)
- 4.2. Selection of Chair/Vice Chair
Prepared By: Cindy Tzaferopoulos, City Clerk
- 4.3. Review of the Role of the Water Advisory Board
Prepared By: April Mitts, Finance Director
- 4.4. Update on City Water Emergency
Prepared By: John Wanger, Interim City Engineer
- 4.5. Review and approval of Application and Use of Exception Permits – Water Emergencies 171 - 176
Prepared By: April Mitts, Finance Director
[Item 4.5 SOP-FI-0021 Application and Use of Exception Permits Water Emergency](#)
[Item 4.5 Exception Form Phase II Water Regulations](#)
- 4.6. Setting regular meeting dates (currently the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month). Required to meet at least 1x per month

5. ADJOURNMENT

The next regular Water Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for May 14, 2021 at 10:00 am.

I do hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing agenda was posted on the City website on April 27, 2021.



Cindy Tzaferopoulos, City Clerk

In Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please call the City Clerk's Office (707) 968-2742. Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting as required by Section 202

of the Americans with Disabilities Act will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

THE CITY OF ST. HELENA ENCOURAGES ONLINE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN VIRTUAL CITY MEETINGS

St. Helena, CA– The City of St. Helena is committed to public participation in City government in a manner that is consistent with guidance provided by the Napa County Public Health Official and Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-25-20. These guidelines relate to social distancing, and are intended to protect everyone by limiting the spread of COVID-19 in our community. In adherence to these guidelines, the St. Helena Water Advisory Board will host a Virtual Board Meeting on Zoom; a free teleconferencing tool that enables users to watch and/or call into the meeting from their computers or phones. This meeting will be open to public and allows for live public comment. The meeting will also be recorded, livestreamed, and posted on the City's website after the adjournment of the meeting if technical difficulties occur: <https://sthelena.civicweb.net/Portal/>

The ZOOM web link, meeting ID, and phone number will be listed at the top of the Meeting Agenda. You will be required to enter the meeting ID, but there will be no password or participant ID.

How to Watch or Listen to Meetings:

1. Watch the livestreaming video on the City's website
2. Watch and Listen on Zoom.us by clicking on the link in the Agenda
4. Listen only by calling the Zoom number listed on the Agenda

Watch Meeting by Joining the Zoom Meeting:

1. By Computer, Tablet, or Smart Phone:

1. Before joining the virtual Meeting, it is highly encouraged that you download the Zoom App. To sign up for your own free account, visit zoom.us/signup and enter your email address. You will receive an email from Zoom (no-reply@zoom.us). In this email, click Activate Account.
2. If you are logged into your account, Enter the **Meeting ID** listed on the Agenda. If you have not created an account go to: <https://zoom.us/join> and enter the **Meeting ID**
3. Select if you would like to connect audio and/or video and tap **Join Meeting**.
4. For specific instructions for your device, go to: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-Meeting>

1. Listen Only by Telephone:

1. **Dial** the number listed on the Agenda.
2. At the prompt, enter the **Meeting ID** provided on the top of the Meeting Agenda and **Press #. A participant ID is not required.**
3. To disconnect from the meeting, hang up the phone.

Ways to Provide Public Comment:

While attending the virtual Meeting, the public will have the opportunity to provide live public comment during Public Forum and after each agenda item.

When it is the appropriate time for public comment the Chair will verbally open public comment. At this time each individual is permitted 4 minutes to speak.

1. Send a Public Comment within two hours prior to the start of the meeting: publiccomment@cityofsthelena.org

The easiest way to provide public comment is to email your public comment. Public comments may be emailed to publiccomment@cityofsthelena.org. Please include in the subject line "COMMENT TO THE BOARD" and the AGENDA ITEM". Any public comment is required to be submitted no later than 2 hours before the scheduled meeting and will be included as an attachment to the agenda. All public comments will be made publicly available and attached to the agenda item and will not be read out loud.

2. Provide Comment through Zoom meeting from a computer, tablet, or smart phone

This option allows the public to virtually attend the meeting as a muted 'attendee' with no video or screen sharing capabilities. You will be able to see and hear those participating in the meeting, but they will not be able to hear you until the host unmutes you.

If you wish to provide public comment during a specific agenda item or during public forum, you can use the "**raise hand**" feature located in the control panel at the bottom of your screen. The icon is a small blue hand. In Windows you can also use the Alt+Y keyboard shortcut to raise or lower your hand. In Mac you can also use the Option+Y keyboard shortcut to raise or lower your hand.

The host will be notified that you've raised your hand and you will be placed in a queue with all incoming requests.

When it is your turn to speak, you will be notified that the host has unmuted you. To be removed from the queue, just click the '**raise hand**' button again.

3. Call in to the ZOOM meeting from a cell phone or landline phone only

This option allows the member of the public with the opportunity to verbally participate in public comment.

If you wish to speak during public comment time dial ***9** on your telephone.

The host will be notified that you would like to speak and you will be placed in a queue with all incoming requests.

When it is your turn to speak, you will be notified that the host has unmuted you. You may press ***9** again if you wish to be removed from the queue.

You will be notified at the end of your statement that you have been muted.



BROWN ACT TRAINING

PRESENTED BY
CINDY TZAFPOPOULOS, CITY CLERK

Basic Rule of the Brown Act

- All meetings of the legislative body (elected and appointed) of a local agency shall be open and public, and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting of the legislative body of a local agency, except as otherwise provided in [the Brown Act].” § 54950
- All meetings of the legislative body of a local agency must be open and public. § 54951
 - Cities are “local agencies”



“Ad-Hoc” Advisory Committee Exception

- All committees established by a legislative body must comply with the Brown Act, UNLESS it:
 - Is ADVISORY, not decision-making; AND
 - Includes ONLY Board Members; AND
 - Includes LESS than a quorum; AND
 - Does NOT have continuing subject matter jurisdiction; AND
 - Is NOT meeting on a fixed schedule set by the Board.

MEETINGS



- A “**meeting**” includes any gathering of a **majority** of the **members** of a legislative body at the **same time and location** to **hear, discuss, deliberate or take action** upon any item which is within its **subject matter jurisdiction**.

Types of Meetings

- **Formal Meetings**
 - Regular meetings
 - Special meetings
- **Informal Meetings**
 - Daisy Chain
 - Hub and Spoke
 - E-mail/Social Media/Technology

Special Meetings

- The presiding officer or a majority of the legislative body may call a special meeting at any time.
- Written notice must be delivered at least 24-hours before the time of the meeting to each legislative body member (unless waived in writing) and to each local newspaper of general circulation, radio and TV station which has requested such notice in writing.
- Only the business set forth in the notice may be considered at the meeting.

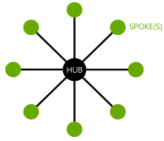
§ 54956



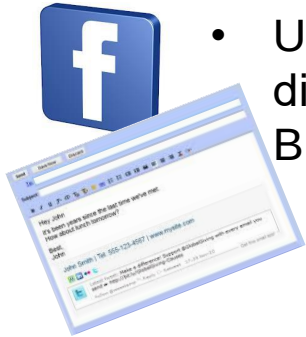
Serial Meetings



- Daisy Chain: If Member A contacts Member B, and Member B contacts Member C, and so on, until a quorum has been involved, this type of “serial meeting” may result in a violation of the Brown Act.



- Hub and spoke: An intermediary -- such as a staff member or even a developer or applicant -- contacts at least a quorum of the members to develop a collective concurrence on action to be taken by the legislative body.



- Use of e-mail or other technology/media by a majority of a legislative body to discuss, deliberate, or take action on items within the body’s jurisdiction violates the Brown Act.

Recommendations for E-mail

- Avoid sending e-mails to the whole legislative body.
 - If necessary, provide information only.
 - Do not solicit a response.
- Be careful replying to e-mails.
 - Do not communicate your position or make a commitment on a pending matter.
 - Do not direct a reply to a majority of the legislative body.
- Think carefully before sending any e-mail.
 - Remember, your e-mail can be forwarded by others to a majority of the legislative body.

Non-Meetings

- An employee or official of a local agency may engage in “**separate conversations or communications**” outside of a meeting in order to “**answer questions or provide information**” so long as that person “**does not communicate to members of the legislative body the comments or positions of any other member or members.**”

§ 54952.2(b)(2).

- Attendance by a majority of members at:
 - A **conference** that is related to the business of the agency that is **open to the public**;

Provided that a majority of the members do not discuss amongst themselves business “of a specific nature” that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the agency.

§ 54952.2 (c)(2)

- Attendance by a majority of members at:
 - An **open and publicized meeting** organized to address a topic of local community concern by **a person or organization other than the local agency**;

Provided that a majority of the members do not discuss amongst themselves business “of a specific nature” that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the agency.

§ 54952.2(c)(3)



Non-Meetings

- Attendance by a majority of members at:
 - A **purely social or ceremonial occasion**,
Provided that a majority of the members do not discuss amongst themselves business “of a specific nature” that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the agency.
- 54952.2
- Attendance by a majority of members at:
 - An **open and noticed meeting of a standing committee** of that body,
Provided that the members of the legislative body who are not members of the standing committee **attend only as observers.**
- § 54952.2(c)(6)



AGENDA REQUIREMENTS AND DESCRIPTION

- Agenda Posting Requirements
- Agenda Description
- Public Comment
- Non-Agendized Items
- Adding Items to an Agenda



- Each item of business to be “*transacted or discussed*,” including items to be discussed in closed session, must be the subject of a “***brief general description***” which generally need not exceed 20 words.
§ 54954.2(a)(1)

Non-Agendized Items

- Action or discussion on any item not appearing on the posted agenda is generally prohibited.
- Members may only:
 - Briefly respond to public statements or questions,
 - Ask a question for clarification,
 - Make a brief announcement,
 - Make a brief report on his or her activities,
 - Provide a reference to staff or other sources for factual information, or
 - Request staff to report back to the legislative body in a subsequent meeting.
- The legislative body may direct staff to place the matter on a future agenda. § 54954.2(a)(2)

Meeting Documents

- The public has the **right to review** agendas and other writings distributed to a majority of the legislative body (except for privileged documents). A fee or deposit may be charged for a copy of a public record.

§ 54957.5(a) and (c)

- Writings must be made public:
 - **at the time distributed** to a majority of the legislative body (before or at a meeting) if prepared by the agency or a member of its legislative body, or
 - **after the meeting** if prepared by some other person.

§ 54957.5(b) and (c)

Recording of Meetings



- The public is allowed to use audio or video tape recorders or still or motion picture cameras at an open meeting, absent a reasonable finding by the legislative body that such recording, if continued, would persistently disrupt the proceedings due to noise, illumination, or obstruction of view. § 54953.5

Public Participation

- A regular meeting agenda must allow an opportunity for members of the public to speak **on any item of interest**, so long as the item is **within the subject matter jurisdiction** of the legislative body.
- The public must be allowed to speak on a **specific item** of business **before** or **during** the legislative body's consideration of it.
- Public comments at **special meetings** can be **limited to agenda items only**.

§ 54954.3 (a)



- Public comment is four minutes.



Limits on Public Participation

- The legislative body may **remove persons** from a meeting who willfully interrupt proceedings. If order still cannot be restored, the meeting room may be **cleared**.
- Members of the **news media** who have not participated in the disturbance must be allowed to continue to attend the meeting.

§ 54957.9

- The legislative body **cannot prohibit public criticism** of policies, procedures, programs, or services of the agency or the omissions of the legislative body itself.



Voting Disclosure

- Legislative bodies must publicly report:
 - any action taken; and
 - the vote or abstention on each action taken by each member present for the action at a meeting.

§ 54953(c)(2)



Where action is taken other than by a roll-call vote:

- The names of each member present who dissented, abstained, or otherwise did not participate should be stated so that there is a clear record of how the entire body voted.
- This information should be included in the minutes of the meeting, along with accurate records of each member's attendance at the meeting.

Questions?



Handbook for Committees, Commissions and Boards

August 2020



Welcome!

Members of boards and commissions provide an invaluable service to our City. They advise the City Council on a wide variety of subjects by making recommendations on important policy matters. Over the years the services and programs provided by the City have expanded. The various boards and commissions provide the City Council with helpful advice and guidance on many complex and significant matters. The considered recommendations of boards and commissions are often catalysts for innovative programs and improved services.

Making local government effective and responsive is everybody's responsibility. Serving on a board or commission can be a rewarding experience for involved residents. It is an excellent way to participate in local government and to make a personal contribution to the improvement of our community.

On behalf of the City Council and staff, thank you for your service and commitment. Please feel free to call the City Manager or City Clerk at (707) 967-2792 or email the City Manager at mprestwich@cityofstheleena.org or the City Clerk at ctzafoopoulos@cityofstheleena.org with any questions you may have.

Mark T. Prestwich

MARK T. PRESTWICH
City Manager

Cindy Tzafoopoulos

CINDY TZAFPOPOULOS
City Clerk

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Appendices

- Appendix A – City of St. Helena Organization Chart
- Appendix B – Listing of City of St. Helena Boards and Commissions
- Appendix C – *Rosenberg’s Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century*
- Appendix D – Protocol for Committee, Commissions and Boards (Resolution 2014-45) and City Council Code of Conduct (Resolution 2019-16)
- Appendix E – *Open and Public: A Guide to the Brown Act*
- Appendix F – Attributes of Exceptional Boards
- Appendix G – City Vision Statement
- Supplemental Information – Committee Bylaws (if applicable)

Purpose

This manual has been prepared to help you understand your role in the governmental structure. The information has been compiled to give you a greater appreciation of how local government functions and what your responsibilities are as a member of a City advisory group.

Each commission serves as an advisory body to the City Council and assists the Council in seeing the “big-picture” perspective on community goals, problems, and possibilities for improvement. Commissioners represent a merger of lay and professional talents in the community by coming together with interests, skills, and experience to guide and ensure effective community planning and organization.

A commission's plan of work is based on an objective review of data and information from a wide variety of sources. A commission must maintain an effective working relationship with staff and all sectors of the community to help promote effective community-wide involvement. Commissions provide a strong link in support of community-wide involvement for effective integration of resources.

The role of the commissioner includes being an evaluator of key trends and developments in their subject area. The commissioner’s task is to identify the most critical concerns that need to be addressed and develop specific recommended actions. The final, and perhaps most important, role of the commissioner is to serve as an advisor to the Council on matters that will be coming before them.

All commissioners/board members are encouraged to attend a City Council meeting to observe the legislative body in action and get a sense of various matters coming before them.

The City’s Mission Statement is also instructive to our commissioners/board members:

The City of St. Helena is dedicated to serving the needs and desires of our citizens by:

- Maintaining and improving our short and long-term economic sustainability
- Offering excellent professional services to all customers
- Establishing, improving and maintaining City infrastructure
- Maintaining and encouraging an environmentally sustainable community
- Preserving and embracing the historic, small-town, rural character of St Helena.
- Expanding and improving recreational services and facilities and cultural opportunities
- Encouraging a wide range of innovative, well-designed housing available for residents of all ages and income levels
- Facilitating full civic participation and ongoing communication
- Strengthening partnerships with the private, non-profit and public sectors

Each commission serves as an advisory body to the City Council and assists the Council in seeing the “big picture” perspective.

General City Information

The City of St. Helena was incorporated as a City on March 24, 1876 and reincorporated on May 14, 1889.

The City of St. Helena operates according to the Council-Manager form of government which vests authority in an elected City Council which, in turn, hires an appointed executive. The City Council is composed of five members elected from the City on a nonpartisan basis to serve staggered four-year terms. The Mayor is elected at-large to serve a two-year term as presiding officer at City Council meetings and as the official head of the City for legislative and ceremonial purposes. The City Manager is appointed by the City Council and serves at the pleasure of that body.

The City Council is the City's legislative and policy-making body. Acting as a whole, the City Council is responsible for passing ordinances and orders necessary for governing the City, as well as for setting the direction of City policy. The City Manager is responsible for the overall administration of the City, which includes implementation of the general policies set by the City Council in addition to the day-to-day operation of all City functions. The City Manager, with the help of the staff, provides the City Council with the information needed to fulfill its policy-making role.

The City Council utilizes a goal setting process and Work Plan, a top level planning document, to establish clear policy direction over all operation aspects of its vision.

Please refer to **Appendix A** for a Citywide Organizational Chart.

Appointment of Commissioners

Following a recruitment process coordinated by the City Clerk's Office, the City Council appoints all members to boards and commissions. Initial appointments are made in the event of vacancies and prior to scheduled terms of office expiring. While there is no maximum length of time a commissioner may serve, the commissioners must seek and apply for reappointment when their terms expire.

Oath of Office

Prior to participating in your first board or commission meeting, the City Clerk will administer the Oath of Office.

Resignation

If you are unable to complete your term of office, please notify the City Clerk and your staff liaison in writing of your resignation effective date.

City Commissions

Each commission receives staff support from a designated staff member(s). Such staff will provide technical information, administrative support, and research

capability for the group.

Please refer to **Appendix B** for a complete listing of the City's Boards and Commissions.

Scope of Authority

With the exception of the Planning Commission roles, the function of City boards/commissions is strictly advisory to the City Council and the scope of authority is granted via a resolution or ordinance. The commissions recommend to the Council the action they think should be taken on specific issues. Again, except for specified actions of the Planning Commission, commissioners have no authority to act on their own without City Council concurrence. They can neither commit City resources nor establish policy for the City without Council authorization.

The function of City Commissions is advisory to the City Council.

Commission recommendations are essential for effective allocation of the resources. Commissions provide the following important services:

1. Identify and develop alternative recommendations regarding issues of a policy nature.
2. Assure the adequate consideration of community values and goals in the commission's area of specialization.
3. Provide a "sounding board" to blend technical solutions to problems with community needs.
4. Enable consideration of various policy recommendations and alternative solutions to problems.

Relations with the Public

An important part of your role as a Commissioner is to know how the public feels about City services related to your commission. You are encouraged to talk to as many residents as possible about matters that pertain to your own commission.

At public meetings you should conduct yourself in a manner that is fair, understanding, and as gracious as circumstances permit. Be considerate of all interests, attitudes, and differences of opinion.

Citizen comments at commission meetings are always welcome and, in fact, state law (Brown Act) requires a public comment period at all meetings.

As a general best practice, with respect to items that may receive more public attention, it is recommended that you disclose contacts that you have with regard to specific agenda items.

Staff Liaisons

City staff members are assigned by the City Manager to help each board/commission handle the required administrative duties. These duties include providing an agenda to guide the formal meetings, preparing staff reports, providing the analysis and technical data needed to develop recommendations for the City Council, and taking and maintaining minutes to

City staff will provide administrative support, advice, and guidance to the Commission.

serve as the official record of the commission's activities.

The staff role is to provide limited support and advice as well as to motivate and guide the board/commission. City staff members and City Council Liaison are not voting members of the commission and do not participate in the decision-making process. Because their role is purely support, they will not respond to questions from the public unless requested to do so by the chair. Staff members serve boards/commissions in an advisory capacity, much the same as the commissions serve the Council. They are selected on the basis of their technical abilities and are expected to guide the boards/commissions with recommendations based upon technical analysis of the situation, regardless of personal opinion.

Commissioners should be aware of staff's responsibilities to provide technical advice to the board/commission and the City Council. When staff members disagree with commission recommendations, they are obligated to advise the City Council, through the City Manager, of the staff recommendations as well as the commissions. In making a final decision, the City Council will consider the advice of the commission and the staff members, as well as other interested individuals.

City Attorney

The City Attorney is appointed by the City Council and responsible for advising the City Council and staff on legal matters. Your staff liaison will obtain any required advice from the City Attorney prior to meetings requiring legal review.

Attendance

Attendance at board/commission meetings is vital. Commissioners shall notify the chair and staff liaison at the earliest possible opportunity in the event of an anticipated absence from a regularly scheduled meeting.

Members who have substantial absences during a calendar year may constitute a review of the commissioner's continued appointment by the City Council. If the City Council recommends resignation of a commissioner due to absence, the resigned position will be announced publicly and filled under the appointment process.

A majority of the members of a board or commission shall constitute a quorum of that board or commission. When less than a majority of the commissioners attend a regular meeting, the only action that may be taken is to adjourn for lack of quorum. Unless otherwise directed by the chair or a majority of the commission, the meeting is automatically adjourned until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Meeting locations of Commissions are posted on the City's website and listed on the agenda. Your staff liaison will notify you of any change in meeting location.

Ethics Training

Planning Commission members will be required to complete an ethics training within 60 days of their appointment date and again every other year for those continuing service. The training is provided by the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) on their website at <http://www.fppc.ca.gov> and compliance

Completion of
Ethics Training is
mandated by State
Law.

is coordinated and tracked by the City Clerk's office. For more information on the Code of Ethics and Conduct, please refer to **Appendix D** in the City Council standard of Conduct.

Meetings

There are three categories of commission meetings: regular, adjourned regular, and special meetings. All meetings are geared to the public and must be conducted in accordance with established procedures and the Brown Act.

Regular meetings are those that by ordinance or resolution are scheduled on a regular basis. There is no action required to set up a regular meeting. To enable adequate public discussion, an agenda is prepared showing the items planned for discussion. All items for discussion should be included on the agenda. If for any reason it is not possible to hold a regular meeting, a notice of cancellation of the meeting must be posted.

An adjourned regular meeting is one that is adjourned by the chair to another date for lack of quorum, or for additional need of a meeting and rescheduled to a later date. Meetings may not be adjourned to a time beyond the next regular meeting. Although the secretary can adjourn a meeting for lack of quorum, a date for an adjourned regular meeting can only be set with the direction of the chair or a majority of the commissioners. A notice announcing the date, time, and place of the adjourned meeting must be posted. An adjourned meeting is considered a regular meeting for the purposes of transacting business.

A special meeting is a meeting that takes place outside of the regular meeting schedule.

Conduct of Meetings

It is the goal of the City to have all meetings conducted professionally and consistently. These guidelines are intended to provide guidance in this area.

Public Meetings

Commission meetings must comply with the Brown Act. All regular, adjourned and special meetings must be open to the public. A 72-hour notice must be given when a regular meeting is called. A 24-hour notice must be given when a special meeting is called.

Agenda Preparation

To facilitate the conduct of a meeting and provide advance notice of the business scheduled for discussion, an agenda is prepared for each meeting. The agenda provided for the commission prior to the meeting includes staff reports and material necessary for the decision-making process. State law requires that the agenda be posted at the meeting location at least 72 hours before a regular meeting.

The agenda is prepared by the staff liaison of the commission and may be coordinated with the commission chair. Items included in the agenda are: approval of minutes from prior meetings, City Council referral items for

The goal is to conduct all meetings professionally and consistently.

board/commission review and advisement, and Public Comment by the public on matters not on the agenda.

Order of Business

Routine items, such as approval of minutes or other non-discussion items may be listed together on the agenda under the “consent” portion, if consent calendar is part of the agenda. The consent agenda may contain several items that can be approved all together with one vote.

When introducing a discussion item at a meeting, the chair should, prior to any discussion on the matter, request that the staff liaison orally provide any background information or staff report. Usually the staff liaison will summarize the written report (if any) provided in the agenda.

Meeting Minutes

The staff liaison is responsible for preparing minutes of all board/commission meetings. These minutes provide an official record of the actions taken. They are not intended as a summary or verbatim transcript.

At each meeting board members/commissioners will be given the opportunity to review minutes of previous meetings as they will typically be placed on the next agenda for board/commission approval. Prior to the vote, the minutes may be ordered corrected at the request of the board/commission to ensure that they accurately reflect the prior proceeding.

Minutes become the official record of a meeting only after the board/commission has approved them. Originals of meeting minutes must be signed and maintained with the City Clerk’s as permanent record.

Presiding Chair

The chair, selected annually by the members of the commission, serves as the presiding chair of all commission meetings. In the chair’s absence, the vice-chair, also elected annually by the commissioners, assumes this role. The vice chair is also selected annually. If both the chair and the vice-chair are absent, the staff liaison will call the meeting to order and the commissioners will select a temporary chair to serve until adjournment or the arrival of the chair or vice-chair.

Commission chairs are selected annually by the Commission.

No member may serve more than two consecutive years as chair unless unanimously agreed upon by the committee and approved by the City Council.

The presiding chair retains the right to make and second motions, participate in debate, and vote on all commission matters.

The commission chair is responsible for maintaining order and decorum throughout the meeting. This includes directing discussion and limiting debate if and when it ceases to be productive.

The commission chair may also consult with staff liaison in drafting the meeting agenda; attend City Council meetings as needed to represent the board,

commission or committee; and may sign correspondence on behalf of the board, commission or committee.

Right to Address the Commission

Subject to the provisions listed below, any member of the public has the right to address the commission during that portion of the meeting allocated for such comments. In addition, any interested person may request permission for the presiding chair to address the commission regarding the subject under consideration or any other subject within the commission's jurisdiction.

When granting permission to speak, the presiding chair should request that the speaker state their name for the record. Comments from the audience should be directed to the commission and not to the staff members present. If a response is needed from the staff, the chair will direct the question to the appropriate person who will then respond to the chair.

The presiding chair may place a time limit on individual speakers from the audience and may request that they avoid reiterating arguments previously presented. A four-minute time limit is set for public comment. Any established procedures for limiting or guiding debate should be explained at the beginning of the meeting and applied uniformly by the chair.

Any person making impertinent, slanderous or profane remarks or who becomes boisterous while addressing the commission may be called to order by the presiding chair and ordered barred from further discussion if the conduct continues.

Debate and Decorum

A board member/commissioner wishing to speak must first gain recognition by the presiding chair and then confine comments to the question under debate. Once he or she has the floor, a commissioner shall not be interrupted unless called to order by the presiding chair or by yielding to another member. After recognition by the presiding chair, members of the public and City staff will likewise hold the floor until completion of their remarks or until recognition is withdrawn by the presiding chair.

Motions

A motion is the formal statement of a proposal or question to the commission for consideration or action. Each member of the commission has the right to present motions. Motions may only be voted on if they receive a second.

Please refer to **Appendix C** for a detailed handbook on *Rosenberg's Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century* and making motions.

Please refer to **Appendix D** for the City of St. Helena's Protocols for Committees, Commissions and Boards (per Resolution 2014-45) and for Conduct of Council Meetings and City Council Standards of Conduct (per Resolution 2019-16).

Voting

After a motion has been made and seconded, all members of the commission

Staff will not converse with the public during a Commission meeting unless directed to do so by the Chair.

have the opportunity to vote unless: 1) they have a conflict of interest on the proposed matter; 2) they have not read the associated documentation; or 3) did not participate in the hearing if one was involved.

Only those motions that receive a majority vote of the present and voting members become official actions of the commission. If you are not present at the dais you may not cast a vote.

Voting and Conflict of Interest

Members may recuse themselves from voting but in doing so must explain for the record why they wish to recuse themselves and leave the room during discussion and voting. The most common reason for recusal is that a potential conflict of interest exists. No board member/commissioner can be forced to vote on an issue, although abstentions that will result in a tie vote should be avoided. Board members/commissioners who abstain are, in effect, permitting the majority to act for them. Tie votes are lost motions that may be reconsidered.

Commissioners who have a conflict with an item must recuse themselves and leave the room when the item is being discussed.

If you have a conflict of interest for any reason, you must state it out loud and you must recuse yourself and your recusal will be noted in the minutes. This means that not only may you not vote but you must leave the dais AND the room, when the discussion and vote are taken.

Reports to the City Council

Board/commission recommendations are typically included in a staff report from the staff liaison to the City Council or through the City Manager. In the report, the staff liaison summarizes the recommendation as well as the pertinent discussion that led to the recommendation for action.

Commissioner Training Programs

Periodically, the City will host an internal Commissioner Workshop featuring instruction on various topics including the Brown Act, how to hold a meeting, parliamentary procedures, etc.

In addition, the League of California Cities will occasionally host regional training programs related to your board/commission.

Brown Act

The Brown Act, described as the strictest open meeting law in the United States, is designed to ensure that meetings of organizations supported with public funds are conducted openly without restrictions on the right of the public to attend. As members of a public body, City board members/commissioners must comply with the provisions of this law.

The Brown Act is designed to ensure that meetings are conducted openly.

As it applies to boards/commissions, the law requires that meetings at which a majority of the board/commission members are in attendance must be open to the public. Members of a board/commission subject to the provisions of the Brown Act are in violation of the law and subject to criminal penalties if they knowingly take action at a meeting held in violation of the Act. For purposes of the Act, an "action" is:

1. A collective decision made by a majority of the members.
2. A collective commitment by the majority of the members to make a specific decision.
3. An actual vote by a majority of the members when they act as a body.

If meetings are scheduled, publicized and held pursuant to City policies and procedures as outlined in this manual, the Brown Act requirements for public discussion will have been met.

Committees and the Brown Act

There are two types of sub-committees – standing and ad hoc. Standing and ad hoc committee membership shall be comprised of less than a quorum of the full board/commission. Board members who are not members of a standing or ad hoc committee shall not typically attend those meetings.

A standing committee is a permanent committee established to consider subjects of a particular topic with regularly scheduled meeting dates and times. Standing committees are subject to the Brown Act. Agendas will be prepared, posted and distributed in accordance with the Brown Act stating the time and place of the meeting and the subject matter to be discussed.

An ad hoc committee is a temporary committee established for a special purpose and limited duration. The board/commission chair together with City staff will determine the scope and approximate length of time the ad hoc committee will be needed. City staff shall work with the City Attorney's Office to review creation of an ad hoc committee to ensure that the committee's purpose is truly ad hoc in nature.

E-Mail and Texting Communications Between Advisory Body Members

Because e-mail communication can ultimately lead to the exchange of information intended to, or which may, create collective concurrence among a quorum of advisory body members, e-mail communications between advisory body members relative to advisory body business, should be avoided. While two members of a five-member body, for example, may appropriately communicate with one another by way of email, the 'forwarding' of such an e-mail message on to a third or subsequent member would result in a Brown Act violation.

E-mail communications between advisory body members should be avoided.

Please be very cautious to avoid using the "Reply All" feature in email.

Please refer to **Appendix E** for more information on the Brown Act.

Conflicts of Interest

The State has enacted laws that address conflicts of interest which may arise when a public official (including City Council appointed commissioners) make recommendations or votes on matters in which they have a direct or indirect financial interest. The Planning Commission is required to file statements of economic interest with the Fair Political Practices Commission through the City Clerk. Other commissioners have been included in the City's Conflict of Interest Code and therefore, those members are also required to file statements of

Conflict of Interest laws are enforceable by the Fair Political Practices Commission.

economic interest with the City Clerk. These statements are filed once upon appointment (Assuming Office) and within 30 days, every year in the beginning of April (Annual) and upon departing from service (Leaving Office) and within 30 days.

Due to their role in property-related decisions, members of the Planning Commission will be provided with a "Conflict of Interest Map" which identifies a commissioner's 500 feet sphere of influence on maps identifying any property conflicts each individual member may have. The information will be based on the member's residential and/or business address, and commissioners must evaluate based on information filed on their annual statement of economic interest.

If it is determined a conflict exists that would prevent a commissioner from participating in discussion or voting on a matter, the commissioner must recuse him or herself from the meeting explaining a potential conflict exists and must leave the dais AND the room, when the discussion and vote are taken. The commissioner may rejoin the meeting once the matter is no longer before the commission. If the meeting is held virtually, the commissioner must sign out of the meeting and will be notified by the staff liaison when to return to the meeting.

All commissioners are encouraged prior to the meeting to determine if they have a conflict of interest. If they are unsure, it is highly recommended they reach out to the staff liaison and/or city attorney for guidance.

Characteristics of an Effective Commission

A board/commission's success can be compared to the success of a team. Success is dependent upon how well that team maintains key character traits.

Please refer to **Appendix F** for *Attributes of Exceptional Boards* from the Institute for Local Government.

Each commission team member is responsible for helping the team



Appendices

August 2020

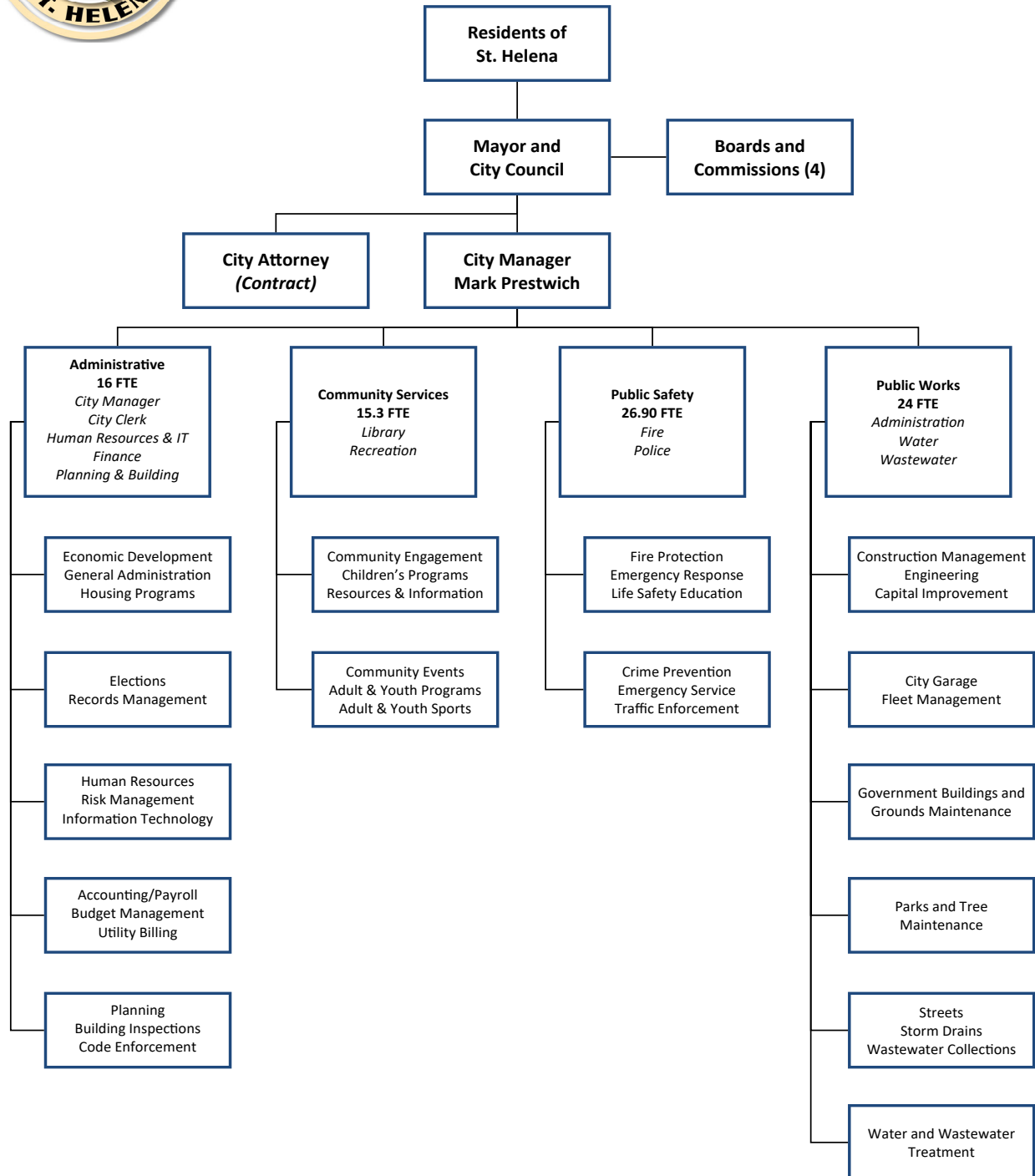


Appendix A



City of St. Helena

Fiscal Year 2020/21 Organizational Chart





Appendix B

St. Helena Boards, Committee & Commissions Roster

Updated: 7/16/2020

Name	Appointment Date	Term Expires
Active Transportation/Sustainability Committee Term of office is 2 years		
Vacant		6/30/2021
Glenn Smith, Vice Chair	9/8/2015	6/30/2022
Vacant		6/30/2022
Jeff Farmer	6/27/2017	6/30/2021
Madelyn Chandler	8/13/2019	6/30/2022
Vacant (alternate)		6/30/2022
Vacant (alternate)		6/30/2022
<i>City Council Liaison/Paul Dohring</i>		
<i>Staff Liaison/Preya Nixon</i>		
Board of Library Trustees Term of office is 2 years		
Lin Weber, Chair	10/14/2014	6/30/2021
Terry Wood, Vice Chair	11/1/2014	6/30/2021
Skip Lane	6/25/2013	6/30/2022
Rebecca Wendt	7/1/2018	6/30/2022
Susan Swan	11/18/2008	6/30/2022
David Slaby	6/27/2017	6/30/2021
Emily Armstead	9/27/2016	6/30/2022
<i>City Council Liaison/Council Member Chouteau</i>		
<i>Staff Liaison/Chris Kreiden</i>		
Parks and Rec Commission Term of office is 2 years		
Matthew Demchuk, Chair	7/14/2015	6/30/2021
Rebekah Weeman, Vice Chair	3/26/2019	6/30/2021
Tye Taylor	8/13/2019	6/30/2022
Susan Kenward	3/26/2019	6/30/2022
Michelle Deasy	6/30/2020	6/30/2022

<i>City Council Liaison/Council Member Knudsen</i>		
<i>Staff Liaison/Andre Pichly</i>		
Planning Commission		
Term of office is 4 years		
Lester Hardy, Chair	6/27/2017	6/30/2021
John Ponte, Vice Chair	6/27/2017	6/30/2021
Autumn Anderson	2/12/2019	6/30/2024
Daniel Hale	11/13/2018	6/30/2022
Bobbi Monnette	6/27/2013	6/30/2021
Mosquito Abatement		
Brian Cramer	7/14/2015	12/31/2021
Napa County Active Transportation Advisory Committee to NVT		
Term of office is 3 years		
Vacant		2023
Napa County Local Food Advisory Council		
Term of office is 4 years		
Jeannie Kerr	3/26/2015	1/1/2023
Napa County Measure A Financial Oversight Committee		
Term of office is 4 years		
Peter Murphy	9/23/2003	6/30/2022



Appendix C



Rosenberg's Rules of Order

REVISED 2011

Simple Rules of Parliamentary Procedure for the 21st Century

By Judge Dave Rosenberg



MISSION AND CORE BELIEFS

To expand and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy to enhance the quality of life for all Californians.

VISION

To be recognized and respected as the leading advocate for the common interests of California's cities.

About the League of California Cities

Established in 1898, the League of California Cities is a member organization that represents California's incorporated cities. The League strives to protect the local authority and autonomy of city government and help California's cities effectively serve their residents. In addition to advocating on cities' behalf at the state capitol, the League provides its members with professional development programs and information resources, conducts education conferences and research, and publishes Western City magazine.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Rosenberg is a Superior Court Judge in Yolo County. He has served as presiding judge of his court, and as presiding judge of the Superior Court Appellate Division. He also has served as chair of the Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee (the committee composed of all 58 California presiding judges) and as an advisory member of the California Judicial Council. Prior to his appointment to the bench, Rosenberg was member of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors, where he served two terms as chair. Rosenberg also served on the Davis City Council, including two terms as mayor. He has served on the senior staff of two governors, and worked for 19 years in private law practice. Rosenberg has served as a member and chair of numerous state, regional and local boards. Rosenberg chaired the California State Lottery Commission, the California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board, the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District, the Yolo County Economic Development Commission, and the Yolo County Criminal Justice Cabinet. For many years, he has taught classes on parliamentary procedure and has served as parliamentarian for large and small bodies.



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INTRODUCTION

The rules of procedure at meetings should be simple enough for most people to understand. Unfortunately, that has not always been the case. Virtually all clubs, associations, boards, councils and bodies follow a set of rules — *Robert's Rules of Order* — which are embodied in a small, but complex, book. Virtually no one I know has actually read this book cover to cover. Worse yet, the book was written for another time and for another purpose. If one is chairing or running a parliament, then *Robert's Rules of Order* is a dandy and quite useful handbook for procedure in that complex setting. On the other hand, if one is running a meeting of say, a five-member body with a few members of the public in attendance, a simplified version of the rules of parliamentary procedure is in order.

Hence, the birth of *Rosenberg's Rules of Order*.

What follows is my version of the rules of parliamentary procedure, based on my decades of experience chairing meetings in state and local government. These rules have been simplified for the smaller bodies we chair or in which we participate, slimmed down for the 21st Century, yet retaining the basic tenets of order to which we have grown accustomed. Interestingly enough, *Rosenberg's Rules* has found a welcoming audience. Hundreds of cities, counties, special districts, committees, boards, commissions, neighborhood associations and private corporations and companies have adopted *Rosenberg's Rules* in lieu of *Robert's Rules* because they have found them practical, logical, simple, easy to learn and user friendly.

This treatise on modern parliamentary procedure is built on a foundation supported by the following four pillars:

1. **Rules should establish order.** The first purpose of rules of parliamentary procedure is to establish a framework for the orderly conduct of meetings.
2. **Rules should be clear.** Simple rules lead to wider understanding and participation. Complex rules create two classes: those who understand and participate; and those who do not fully understand and do not fully participate.
3. **Rules should be user friendly.** That is, the rules must be simple enough that the public is invited into the body and feels that it has participated in the process.
4. **Rules should enforce the will of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority.** The ultimate purpose of rules of procedure is to encourage discussion and to facilitate decision making by the body. In a democracy, majority rules. The rules must enable the majority to express itself and fashion a result, while permitting the minority to also express itself, but not dominate, while fully participating in the process.

Establishing a Quorum

The starting point for a meeting is the establishment of a quorum. A quorum is defined as the minimum number of members of the body who must be present at a meeting for business to be legally transacted. The default rule is that a quorum is one more than half the body. For example, in a five-member body a quorum is three. When the body has three members present, it can legally transact business. If the body has less than a quorum of members present, it cannot legally transact business. And even if the body has a quorum to begin the meeting, the body can lose the quorum during the meeting when a member departs (or even when a member leaves the dais). When that occurs the body loses its ability to transact business until and unless a quorum is reestablished.

The default rule, identified above, however, gives way to a specific rule of the body that establishes a quorum. For example, the rules of a particular five-member body may indicate that a quorum is four members for that particular body. The body must follow the rules it has established for its quorum. In the absence of such a specific rule, the quorum is one more than half the members of the body.

The Role of the Chair

While all members of the body should know and understand the rules of parliamentary procedure, it is the chair of the body who is charged with applying the rules of conduct of the meeting. The chair should be well versed in those rules. For all intents and purposes, the chair makes the final ruling on the rules every time the chair states an action. In fact, all decisions by the chair are final unless overruled by the body itself.

Since the chair runs the conduct of the meeting, it is usual courtesy for the chair to play a less active role in the debate and discussion than other members of the body. This does not mean that the chair should not participate in the debate or discussion. To the contrary, as a member of the body, the chair has the full right to participate in the debate, discussion and decision-making of the body. What the chair should do, however, is strive to be the last to speak at the discussion and debate stage. The chair should not make or second a motion unless the chair is convinced that no other member of the body will do so at that point in time.

The Basic Format for an Agenda Item Discussion

Formal meetings normally have a written, often published agenda. Informal meetings may have only an oral or understood agenda. In either case, the meeting is governed by the agenda and the agenda constitutes the body's agreed-upon roadmap for the meeting. Each agenda item can be handled by the chair in the following basic format:

First, the chair should clearly announce the agenda item number and should clearly state what the agenda item subject is. The chair should then announce the format (which follows) that will be followed in considering the agenda item.

Second, following that agenda format, the chair should invite the appropriate person or persons to report on the item, including any recommendation that they might have. The appropriate person or persons may be the chair, a member of the body, a staff person, or a committee chair charged with providing input on the agenda item.

Third, the chair should ask members of the body if they have any technical questions of clarification. At this point, members of the body may ask clarifying questions to the person or persons who reported on the item, and that person or persons should be given time to respond.

Fourth, the chair should invite public comments, or if appropriate at a formal meeting, should open the public meeting for public input. If numerous members of the public indicate a desire to speak to the subject, the chair may limit the time of public speakers. At the conclusion of the public comments, the chair should announce that public input has concluded (or the public hearing, as the case may be, is closed).

Fifth, the chair should invite a motion. The chair should announce the name of the member of the body who makes the motion.

Sixth, the chair should determine if any member of the body wishes to second the motion. The chair should announce the name of the member of the body who seconds the motion. It is normally good practice for a motion to require a second before proceeding to ensure that it is not just one member of the body who is interested in a particular approach. However, a second is not an absolute requirement, and the chair can proceed with consideration and vote on a motion even when there is no second. This is a matter left to the discretion of the chair.

Seventh, if the motion is made and seconded, the chair should make sure everyone understands the motion.

This is done in one of three ways:

1. The chair can ask the maker of the motion to repeat it;
2. The chair can repeat the motion; or
3. The chair can ask the secretary or the clerk of the body to repeat the motion.

Eighth, the chair should now invite discussion of the motion by the body. If there is no desired discussion, or after the discussion has ended, the chair should announce that the body will vote on the motion. If there has been no discussion or very brief discussion, then the vote on the motion should proceed immediately and there is no need to repeat the motion. If there has been substantial discussion, then it is normally best to make sure everyone understands the motion by repeating it.

Ninth, the chair takes a vote. Simply asking for the “ayes” and then asking for the “nays” normally does this. If members of the body do not vote, then they “abstain.” Unless the rules of the body provide otherwise (or unless a super majority is required as delineated later in these rules), then a simple majority (as defined in law or the rules of the body as delineated later in these rules) determines whether the motion passes or is defeated.

Tenth, the chair should announce the result of the vote and what action (if any) the body has taken. In announcing the result, the chair should indicate the names of the members of the body, if any, who voted in the minority on the motion. This announcement might take the following form: “The motion passes by a vote of 3-2, with Smith and Jones dissenting. We have passed the motion requiring a 10-day notice for all future meetings of this body.”

Motions in General

Motions are the vehicles for decision making by a body. It is usually best to have a motion before the body prior to commencing discussion of an agenda item. This helps the body focus.

Motions are made in a simple two-step process. First, the chair should recognize the member of the body. Second, the member of the body makes a motion by preceding the member’s desired approach with the words “I move . . .”

A typical motion might be: “I move that we give a 10-day notice in the future for all our meetings.”

The chair usually initiates the motion in one of three ways:

1. **Inviting the members of the body to make a motion**, for example, “A motion at this time would be in order.”
2. **Suggesting a motion to the members of the body**, “A motion would be in order that we give a 10-day notice in the future for all our meetings.”
3. **Making the motion**. As noted, the chair has every right as a member of the body to make a motion, but should normally do so only if the chair wishes to make a motion on an item but is convinced that no other member of the body is willing to step forward to do so at a particular time.

The Three Basic Motions

There are three motions that are the most common and recur often at meetings:

The basic motion. The basic motion is the one that puts forward a decision for the body’s consideration. A basic motion might be: “I move that we create a five-member committee to plan and put on our annual fundraiser.”

The motion to amend. If a member wants to change a basic motion that is before the body, they would move to amend it. A motion to amend might be: “I move that we amend the motion to have a 10-member committee.” A motion to amend takes the basic motion that is before the body and seeks to change it in some way.

The substitute motion. If a member wants to completely do away with the basic motion that is before the body, and put a new motion before the body, they would move a substitute motion. A substitute motion might be: “I move a substitute motion that we cancel the annual fundraiser this year.”

“Motions to amend” and “substitute motions” are often confused, but they are quite different, and their effect (if passed) is quite different. A motion to amend seeks to retain the basic motion on the floor, but modify it in some way. A substitute motion seeks to throw out the basic motion on the floor, and substitute a new and different motion for it. The decision as to whether a motion is really a “motion to amend” or a “substitute motion” is left to the chair. So if a member makes what that member calls a “motion to amend,” but the chair determines that it is really a “substitute motion,” then the chair’s designation governs.

A “friendly amendment” is a practical parliamentary tool that is simple, informal, saves time and avoids bogging a meeting down with numerous formal motions. It works in the following way: In the discussion on a pending motion, it may appear that a change to the motion is desirable or may win support for the motion from some members. When that happens, a member who has the floor may simply say, “I want to suggest a friendly amendment to the motion.” The member suggests the friendly amendment, and if the maker and the person who seconded the motion pending on the floor accepts the friendly amendment, that now becomes the pending motion on the floor. If either the maker or the person who seconded rejects the proposed friendly amendment, then the proposer can formally move to amend.

Multiple Motions Before the Body

There can be up to three motions on the floor at the same time. The chair can reject a fourth motion until the chair has dealt with the three that are on the floor and has resolved them. This rule has practical value. More than three motions on the floor at any given time is confusing and unwieldy for almost everyone, including the chair.

When there are two or three motions on the floor (after motions and seconds) at the same time, the vote should proceed *first* on the *last* motion that is made. For example, assume the first motion is a basic “motion to have a five-member committee to plan and put on our annual fundraiser.” During the discussion of this motion, a member might make a second motion to “amend the main motion to have a 10-member committee, not a five-member committee to plan and put on our annual fundraiser.” And perhaps, during that discussion, a member makes yet a third motion as a “substitute motion that we not have an annual fundraiser this year.” The proper procedure would be as follows:

First, the chair would deal with the *third* (the last) motion on the floor, the substitute motion. After discussion and debate, a vote would be taken first on the third motion. If the substitute motion *passed*, it would be a substitute for the basic motion and would eliminate it. The first motion would be moot, as would the second motion (which sought to amend the first motion), and the action on the agenda item would be completed on the passage by the body of the third motion (the substitute motion). No vote would be taken on the first or second motions.

Second, if the substitute motion *failed*, the chair would then deal with the second (now the last) motion on the floor, the motion to amend. The discussion and debate would focus strictly on the amendment (should the committee be five or 10 members). If the motion to amend *passed*, the chair would then move to consider the main motion (the first motion) as *amended*. If the motion to amend *failed*, the chair would then move to consider the main motion (the first motion) in its original format, not amended.

Third, the chair would now deal with the first motion that was placed on the floor. The original motion would either be in its original format (five-member committee), or if *amended*, would be in its amended format (10-member committee). The question on the floor for discussion and decision would be whether a committee should plan and put on the annual fundraiser.

To Debate or Not to Debate

The basic rule of motions is that they are subject to discussion and debate. Accordingly, basic motions, motions to amend, and substitute motions are all eligible, each in their turn, for full discussion before and by the body. The debate can continue as long as members of the body wish to discuss an item, subject to the decision of the chair that it is time to move on and take action.

There are exceptions to the general rule of free and open debate on motions. The exceptions all apply when there is a desire of the body to move on. The following motions are not debatable (that is, when the following motions are made and seconded, the chair must immediately call for a vote of the body without debate on the motion):

Motion to adjourn. This motion, if passed, requires the body to immediately adjourn to its next regularly scheduled meeting. It requires a simple majority vote.

Motion to recess. This motion, if passed, requires the body to immediately take a recess. Normally, the chair determines the length of the recess which may be a few minutes or an hour. It requires a simple majority vote.

Motion to fix the time to adjourn. This motion, if passed, requires the body to adjourn the meeting at the specific time set in the motion. For example, the motion might be: “I move we adjourn this meeting at midnight.” It requires a simple majority vote.

Motion to table. This motion, if passed, requires discussion of the agenda item to be halted and the agenda item to be placed on “hold.” The motion can contain a specific time in which the item can come back to the body. “I move we table this item until our regular meeting in October.” Or the motion can contain no specific time for the return of the item, in which case a motion to take the item off the table and bring it back to the body will have to be taken at a future meeting. A motion to table an item (or to bring it back to the body) requires a simple majority vote.

Motion to limit debate. The most common form of this motion is to say, “I move the previous question” or “I move the question” or “I call the question” or sometimes someone simply shouts out “question.” As a practical matter, when a member calls out one of these phrases, the chair can expedite matters by treating it as a “request” rather than as a formal motion. The chair can simply inquire of the body, “any further discussion?” If no one wishes to have further discussion, then the chair can go right to the pending motion that is on the floor. However, if even one person wishes to discuss the pending motion further, then at that point, the chair should treat the call for the “question” as a formal motion, and proceed to it.

When a member of the body makes such a motion (“I move the previous question”), the member is really saying: “I’ve had enough debate. Let’s get on with the vote.” When such a motion is made, the chair should ask for a second, stop debate, and vote on the motion to limit debate. The motion to limit debate requires a two-thirds vote of the body.

NOTE: A motion to limit debate could include a time limit. For example: “I move we limit debate on this agenda item to 15 minutes.” Even in this format, the motion to limit debate requires a two-thirds vote of the body. A similar motion is a *motion to object to consideration of an item*. This motion is not debatable, and if passed, precludes the body from even considering an item on the agenda. It also requires a two-thirds vote.

Majority and Super Majority Votes

In a democracy, a simple majority vote determines a question. A tie vote means the motion fails. So in a seven-member body, a vote of 4-3 passes the motion. A vote of 3-3 with one abstention means the motion fails. If one member is absent and the vote is 3-3, the motion still fails.

All motions require a simple majority, but there are a few exceptions. The exceptions come up when the body is taking an action which effectively cuts off the ability of a minority of the body to take an action or discuss an item. These extraordinary motions require a two-thirds majority (a super majority) to pass:

Motion to limit debate. Whether a member says, “I move the previous question,” or “I move the question,” or “I call the question,” or “I move to limit debate,” it all amounts to an attempt to cut off the ability of the minority to discuss an item, and it requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

Motion to close nominations. When choosing officers of the body (such as the chair), nominations are in order either from a nominating committee or from the floor of the body. A motion to close nominations effectively cuts off the right of the minority to nominate officers and it requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

Motion to object to the consideration of a question. Normally, such a motion is unnecessary since the objectionable item can be tabled or defeated straight up. However, when members of a body do not even want an item on the agenda to be considered, then such a motion is in order. It is not debatable, and it requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

Motion to suspend the rules. This motion is debatable, but requires a two-thirds vote to pass. If the body has its own rules of order, conduct or procedure, this motion allows the body to suspend the rules for a particular purpose. For example, the body (a private club) might have a rule prohibiting the attendance at meetings by non-club members. A motion to suspend the rules would be in order to allow a non-club member to attend a meeting of the club on a particular date or on a particular agenda item.

Counting Votes

The matter of counting votes starts simple, but can become complicated.

Usually, it’s pretty easy to determine whether a particular motion passed or whether it was defeated. If a simple majority vote is needed to pass a motion, then one vote more than 50 percent of the body is required. For example, in a five-member body, if the vote is three in favor and two opposed, the motion passes. If it is two in favor and three opposed, the motion is defeated.

If a two-thirds majority vote is needed to pass a motion, then how many affirmative votes are required? The simple rule of thumb is to count the “no” votes and double that count to determine how many “yes” votes are needed to pass a particular motion. For example, in a seven-member body, if two members vote “no” then the “yes” vote of at least four members is required to achieve a two-thirds majority vote to pass the motion.

What about tie votes? In the event of a tie, the motion always fails since an affirmative vote is required to pass any motion. For example, in a five-member body, if the vote is two in favor and two opposed, with one member absent, the motion is defeated.

Vote counting starts to become complicated when members vote “abstain” or in the case of a written ballot, cast a blank (or unreadable) ballot. Do these votes count, and if so, how does one count them? The starting point is always to check the statutes.

In California, for example, for an action of a board of supervisors to be valid and binding, the action must be approved by a majority of the board. (California Government Code Section 25005.) Typically, this means three of the five members of the board must vote affirmatively in favor of the action. A vote of 2-1 would not be sufficient. A vote of 3-0 with two abstentions would be sufficient. In general law cities in

California, as another example, resolutions or orders for the payment of money and all ordinances require a recorded vote of the total members of the city council. (California Government Code Section 36936.) Cities with charters may prescribe their own vote requirements. Local elected officials are always well-advised to consult with their local agency counsel on how state law may affect the vote count.

After consulting state statutes, step number two is to check the rules of the body. If the rules of the body say that you count votes of “those present” then you treat abstentions one way. However, if the rules of the body say that you count the votes of those “present and voting,” then you treat abstentions a different way. And if the rules of the body are silent on the subject, then the general rule of thumb (and default rule) is that you count all votes that are “present and voting.”

Accordingly, under the “present and voting” system, you would **NOT** count abstention votes on the motion. Members who abstain are counted for purposes of determining quorum (they are “present”), but you treat the abstention votes on the motion as if they did not exist (they are not “voting”). On the other hand, if the rules of the body specifically say that you count votes of those “present” then you **DO** count abstention votes both in establishing the quorum and on the motion. In this event, the abstention votes act just like “no” votes.

How does this work in practice?

Here are a few examples.

Assume that a five-member city council is voting on a motion that requires a simple majority vote to pass, and assume further that the body has no specific rule on counting votes. Accordingly, the default rule kicks in and we count all votes of members that are “present and voting.” If the vote on the motion is 3-2, the motion passes. If the motion is 2-2 with one abstention, the motion fails.

Assume a five-member city council voting on a motion that requires a two-thirds majority vote to pass, and further assume that the body has no specific rule on counting votes. Again, the default rule applies. If the vote is 3-2, the motion fails for lack of a two-thirds majority. If the vote is 4-1, the motion passes with a clear two-thirds majority. A vote of three “yes,” one “no” and one “abstain” also results in passage of the motion. Once again, the abstention is counted only for the purpose of determining quorum, but on the actual vote on the motion, it is as if the abstention vote never existed — so an effective 3-1 vote is clearly a two-thirds majority vote.

Now, change the scenario slightly. Assume the same five-member city council voting on a motion that requires a two-thirds majority vote to pass, but now assume that the body **DOES** have a specific rule requiring a two-thirds vote of members “present.” Under this specific rule, we must count the members present not only for quorum but also for the motion. In this scenario, any abstention has the same force and effect as if it were a “no” vote. Accordingly, if the votes were three “yes,” one “no” and one “abstain,” then the motion fails. The abstention in this case is treated like a “no” vote and effective vote of 3-2 is not enough to pass two-thirds majority muster.

Now, exactly how does a member cast an “abstention” vote?

Any time a member votes “abstain” or says, “I abstain,” that is an abstention. However, if a member votes “present” that is also treated as an abstention (the member is essentially saying, “Count me for purposes of a quorum, but my vote on the issue is abstain.”) In fact, any manifestation of intention not to vote either “yes” or “no” on the pending motion may be treated by the chair as an abstention. If written ballots are cast, a blank or unreadable ballot is counted as an abstention as well.

Can a member vote “absent” or “count me as absent?” Interesting question. The ruling on this is up to the chair. The better approach is for the chair to count this as if the member had left his/her chair and is actually “absent.” That, of course, affects the quorum. However, the chair may also treat this as a vote to abstain, particularly if the person does not actually leave the dais.

The Motion to Reconsider

There is a special and unique motion that requires a bit of explanation all by itself; the motion to reconsider. A tenet of parliamentary procedure is finality. After vigorous discussion, debate and a vote, there must be some closure to the issue. And so, after a vote is taken, the matter is deemed closed, subject only to reopening if a proper motion to consider is made and passed.

A motion to reconsider requires a majority vote to pass like other garden-variety motions, but there are two special rules that apply only to the motion to reconsider.

First, is the matter of timing. A motion to reconsider must be made at the meeting where the item was first voted upon. A motion to reconsider made at a later time is untimely. (The body, however, can always vote to suspend the rules and, by a two-thirds majority, allow a motion to reconsider to be made at another time.)

Second, a motion to reconsider may be made only by certain members of the body. Accordingly, a motion to reconsider may be made only by a member who voted in the majority on the original motion. If such a member has a change of heart, he or she may make the motion to reconsider (any other member of the body — including a member who voted in the minority on the original motion — may second the motion). If a member who voted in the minority seeks to make the motion to reconsider, it must be ruled out of order. The purpose of this rule is finality. If a member of minority could make a motion to reconsider, then the item could be brought back to the body again and again, which would defeat the purpose of finality.

If the motion to reconsider passes, then the original matter is back before the body, and a new original motion is in order. The matter may be discussed and debated as if it were on the floor for the first time.

Courtesy and Decorum

The rules of order are meant to create an atmosphere where the members of the body and the members of the public can attend to business efficiently, fairly and with full participation. At the same time, it is up to the chair and the members of the body to maintain common courtesy and decorum. Unless the setting is very informal, it is always best for only one person at a time to have the floor, and it is always best for every speaker to be first recognized by the chair before proceeding to speak.

The chair should always ensure that debate and discussion of an agenda item focuses on the item and the policy in question, not the personalities of the members of the body. Debate on policy is healthy, debate on personalities is not. The chair has the right to cut off discussion that is too personal, is too loud, or is too crude.

Debate and discussion should be focused, but free and open. In the interest of time, the chair may, however, limit the time allotted to speakers, including members of the body.

Can a member of the body interrupt the speaker? The general rule is “no.” There are, however, exceptions. A speaker may be interrupted for the following reasons:

Privilege. The proper interruption would be, “point of privilege.” The chair would then ask the interrupter to “state your point.” Appropriate points of privilege relate to anything that would interfere with the normal comfort of the meeting. For example, the room may be too hot or too cold, or a blowing fan might interfere with a person’s ability to hear.

Order. The proper interruption would be, “point of order.” Again, the chair would ask the interrupter to “state your point.” Appropriate points of order relate to anything that would not be considered appropriate conduct of the meeting. For example, if the chair moved on to a vote on a motion that permits debate without allowing that discussion or debate.

Appeal. If the chair makes a ruling that a member of the body disagrees with, that member may appeal the ruling of the chair. If the motion is seconded, and after debate, if it passes by a simple majority vote, then the ruling of the chair is deemed reversed.

Call for orders of the day. This is simply another way of saying, “return to the agenda.” If a member believes that the body has drifted from the agreed-upon agenda, such a call may be made. It does not require a vote, and when the chair discovers that the agenda has not been followed, the chair simply reminds the body to return to the agenda item properly before them. If the chair fails to do so, the chair’s determination may be appealed.

Withdraw a motion. During debate and discussion of a motion, the maker of the motion on the floor, at any time, may interrupt a speaker to withdraw his or her motion from the floor. The motion is immediately deemed withdrawn, although the chair may ask the person who seconded the motion if he or she wishes to make the motion, and any other member may make the motion if properly recognized.

Special Notes About Public Input

The rules outlined above will help make meetings very public-friendly. But in addition, and particularly for the chair, it is wise to remember three special rules that apply to each agenda item:

Rule One: Tell the public what the body will be doing.

Rule Two: Keep the public informed while the body is doing it.

Rule Three: When the body has acted, tell the public what the body did.



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Appendix D

CITY OF ST. HELENA

RESOLUTION NO. 2014-45

**APPROVING THE CITY OF ST. HELENA PROTOCOL FOR
COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS AND BOARDS AND RELATED
DOCUMENTS**

WHEREAS, the City Council has created a number of committees, boards and commissions, including the Planning Commission, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Library Board of Trustees, the Tree Committee, the Sustainability Committee, the Multicultural Committee, the Active Transportation Committee, and the Water Board; and

WHEREAS, the City's committees, commissions and boards provide a valuable service to the community and the City Council relies on these entities to provide information, advice, recommendations and decisions related to their area of expertise and authority; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to standardize committee structure and operating procedures and provide necessary guidance in order to ensure these committees, commissions and boards are efficient and effective and serve in the best interests of the community; and

WHEREAS, at its regular meetings of November 27, 2012, January 23, 2013, July 23, 2013, and June 10, 2014, the City Council discussed a draft City of St. Helena Protocol for Committees, Commissions and Boards, and received public testimony on the draft Protocol.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the St. Helena City Council adopts the St. Helena Protocol for Committees, Commissions and Boards and related Meeting Ground Rules, Committee Standards of Conduct, Agenda format and Minutes format, as set forth in Exhibit A.

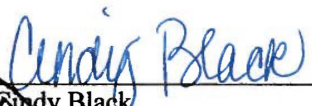
PASSED, APPROVED and ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of St. Helena held on the 8th of July, 2014 by the following vote:

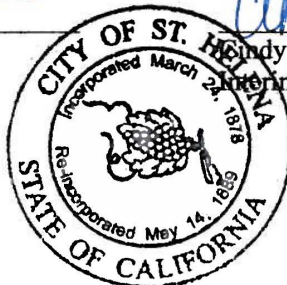
AYES: Councilmember: White, Sculatti and Mayor Nevero
NOES: None
ABSENT: Councilmember: Crull and Pitts
ABSTAIN: None

APPROVED:

ATTEST:


Ann Nevero
Mayor


Cindy Black
Interim City Clerk





City of St. Helena Protocol for Committees, Commissions and Boards (CCB)

St. Helena Committees, Commissions and Boards (CCB) function under the direction of the City Council on behalf of the City and its residents. The Council establishes committees by ordinance or resolution defining the role, purpose and membership. While each one functions specific to its purpose, all must follow the same overriding principles which are herein defined.

This protocol is intended to provide general guidance, and is not intended to supersede or conflict with any provision of State law, the St. Helena Municipal Code or other ordinance adopted by the City Council, which in the event of any conflict shall control.

ROLE AND PURPOSE

The City Council determines a committee's role and purpose at the time it is created, which should be defined clearly enough to easily communicate the purpose of the committee to the general public.

Committees may be 1) on-going standing committees, or 2) established for a specific purpose with an expected end date. Roles and purpose may be general or specific, but all will have a clearly defined goal, task or product.

Recommended changes in the role or purpose of a committee must be brought to the City Council to clarify how the proposed changes will provide improved or additional benefit.

MEMBERSHIP AND COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The City Council defines the membership size by resolution or ordinance when establishing a committee. A committee consists of a minimum of five and a maximum of seven members, except the Planning Commission which consists only of five regular members. The Council may appoint up to two alternate members to serve on a committee in order to ensure a quorum can be reached if members cannot attend. City Council members and staff shall not sit as members on any committees. However,

the City Council may, in its discretion, appoint two Council members in the composition of a City Council subcommittee for a specific purpose.

As required by State law, the Mayor shall nominate committee members from the pool of applicants, and they will be appointed only after a majority vote approval by the City Council. Applicants may choose to attend the City Council meeting and make a statement in support of their application before the Council votes on the appointment.

Residency. Committee members must reside within the St. Helena City limits. The Council may approve an exception to this rule on a case-by-case basis. All five Planning Commissioners must live within the St. Helena City limits.

Member Terms. Committee members will serve two years from the date of appointment, except Planning Commissioners who will serve four years. Non-standing committee membership will be based upon the timing of the specific project. In establishing a new committee, or when reducing existing terms from three years to two when those terms come up for reappointment, the Council may initially impose staggered terms consisting of one and two year terms.

Removal of a member may occur for reasons such as, but not limited to, excessive absences, Brown Act violations, and conduct violations. Recommendations to the City Council for removal may be made by a committee member, member of the public, staff member, or City Councilmember. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the City Council may in its discretion at any time vote to remove a member of any committee for any reason or none, with or without cause.

Committee Officers. Annually, a committee will select a chairperson and vice chairperson. No member may serve more than two consecutive years as chair, unless unanimously agreed upon by the Committee in a sealed vote and approved by the City Council.

The chairperson runs the meeting in accordance with the agenda. The vice chairperson has the same powers and duties of the chair if the chair is absent or unable to act. If both the chair and vice-chair are absent or unable to act, the committee selects by motion and majority vote one member as acting chair for the duration of the meeting or absence.

Subcommittees. The committee may in its discretion appoint members to subcommittees for the purpose of researching specific issues, conducting community outreach, and/or formulating recommendations to the committee, and may also engage experts or other persons (who will not be considered as members). Subcommittee membership will be less than a majority of the total membership of the committee. Prior to creating a subcommittee, the committee will consult with staff to determine whether the subcommittee is subject to the Brown Act, in which case formation of the subcommittee will be subject to Council approval.

Bylaws. Committees may adopt bylaws governing their work that are consistent with this protocol and other City laws. Proposed bylaws must be reviewed by staff and approved by the City Council.

MEETING ADMINISTRATION

- Committees should meet at a regular interval (day and time) and location to facilitate public attendance and to provide an accessible forum for the public to attend.
- Committees and committee members shall conduct themselves in accordance with the requirements of State law and the Municipal Code.
- Meetings must be noticed to the public at least 72 hours prior to regular meetings, and 24 hours prior to special meetings, as required by the Brown Act.
- All meeting notices must be posted outside St. Helena City Hall and on the City website.
- Agendas must adhere to the form provided by the City to ensure consistency and clarity.
- Meeting minutes will be recorded using the City template and submitted for approval at the next committee meeting. Once approved, the minutes are submitted to the City Clerk for official record.

Quorum and Voting. A quorum is required to hold a meeting. A quorum is defined as the majority of the number of members, not counting alternates, which officially comprise a committee. Absences and vacancies do not change the quorum number. For example, if a committee is established with five members, the quorum is three members. If there are two vacancies on the committee, the quorum is still three members.

If a committee meets but does not have a quorum, either through lack of a quorum at the start of the meeting or due to members leaving the meeting, the committee may not conduct its regular business. In these instances, the committee may only act to adjourn to the next meeting date, recess, or take measures to obtain a quorum.

A majority vote is required to approve any action by the committee, unless otherwise required by law.

Alternate Members. Alternate members may vote only upon one of the following conditions:

1. Absence of one or more of the regular members of the committee; or
2. Disqualification of a regular member of the committee due to an expressed conflict of interest.

If more than one alternate member is present and only one vote is available, the alternate members will toss a coin to determine who may vote.

City Staff Liaison. The City Manager will designate a staff liaison to each committee. The liaison will be available to attend committee meetings at the request of the committee chair and with advance notice. The staff liaison's role is to assist the committee in understanding City functions and requirements, such as state regulations, Municipal Code requirements, and conflict of interest and Brown Act requirements. The staff liaison ensures the continued flow of information regarding the City's efforts and progress on work that pertains to the committee's topic area. The staff liaison will collect and file committee records and minutes.

CITY COUNCIL REPORTS

The chairperson or committee designee will appear at a City Council meeting at least once per quarter to report on the committee's activities and projects and to provide updates to the Council and community. The City Council will provide input and direction at that time. Committee chairpersons or designated committee members are encouraged to appear before the Council whenever they feel it is necessary to obtain Council direction or share information.

PROFESSIONALISM AND MEETING BEHAVIOR

As official representatives of the City of St. Helena, committee members are expected to conduct their duties in keeping with the St. Helena Committee Standards of Conduct and to maintain the highest level of professionalism during their tenure. Committees conduct City-sanctioned work for the benefit of all St. Helena residents.

All St. Helena committee meetings will be conducted in an open, fair and professional manner. Committees must ensure a welcoming atmosphere for all participants. St. Helena Meeting Ground Rules must be posted at each meeting, and adhered to, in order to ensure meetings are efficient, productive and respectful.

Committees are formed to improve understanding, ideas, processes or outcomes, and by definition that means individuals will have, and should have, different, and perhaps controversial, opinions. Open, honest dialogue is the goal, and is not to be viewed as a problem. Discussion of topics, not discussion of individuals, should be the focus of committee members both inside and outside the meetings. Committee members represent the City of St. Helena, and therefore may not negatively discuss members or public participants outside meetings. Members can request staff assistance, either during or after the meeting, with unruly or disruptive participants. No committee member should tolerate abuse toward other participants, members or themselves.

THE BROWN ACT AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST RULES

The Brown Act

Members of St. Helena committees are required to function under the Brown Act. Committees should have a clear understanding of Brown Act rules. The City will provide committees with Brown Act training materials, which must be reviewed by all members. Committee chairs can request specific information from City staff regarding Brown Act questions.

In general, the Brown Act requires all meetings of a legislative body of a local government, including all committees established by the St. Helena City Council, to be open and public. In some instances these requirements will apply to subcommittees.

- All meetings must be properly noticed and discussion items properly agendized.
- A “meeting” means any gathering of a majority of the members of a committee to hear, discuss or deliberate on any matter within the committee’s jurisdiction.
- Communication outside a meeting by members is restricted by the Brown Act if that communication results in:
 - A “serial” meeting involving a majority of the committee members. A serial meeting may occur if a member communicates to one member, who then communicates to another member, until a majority of members have become involved in the communication.
 - a “spoke and wheel” meeting where a member separately communicates to a majority of members.
- In order to avoid unintended “meetings” involving a quorum,, committee members should generally submit their comments to staff, and should not engage in “reply all” emails or emails or other communications involving a majority of the committee.

Violations of the Brown Act are serious, and can jeopardize the validity of committee decisions. Violations that are willful can carry criminal penalties.

Conflicts of Interest/Due Process

In addition to the Brown Act, State laws, such as the Political Reform Act (“PRA”), impose certain conflict of interest rules on City committee members. For example, the PRA requires members to make certain financial disclosures and prohibits members’ participation in decisions affecting members’ financial interests.

As with the Brown Act, the City will provide committees with conflict of interest training materials, which must be reviewed by all members. Committee chairs can request specific information from City staff regarding conflict questions.

Conflicts may exist where a member lives in close proximity to a project site or other place affected by the committee’s decision, or where a committee member’s personal financial interests or the financial interests of a member’s business, family or source of income may be affected by the decision to be made by the committee. In such instances, the member may be prohibited from participating in the decision.

Conflict of interest rules are complex. Moreover, as with the Brown Act, violations of the PRA are serious, and can jeopardize the validity of committee decisions. Violations can result in substantial fines and criminal penalties.

Committee members may receive assistance on questions from the State Fair Political Practices Commission (“FPPC”), which is the agency that is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the PRA. In addition, Committee chairs may ask staff for assistance. Because conflict questions are often complex and fact-intensive, committee members are urged to attempt to identify potential conflict issues well in advance of meetings at which the decision is to be made.

Finally, in addition to conflict of interest rules involving financial interests under the PRA, some committee decisions on matters that require committees to act as “judges,” as for example when the Planning Commission acts on subdivision map applications or use permits, variances and/or design review, fair hearing and due process requirements apply. Those requirements may preclude members from participating in decisions where the member is “personally embroiled” in the decision at stake, and also may require members to disclose information received outside of a public hearing so that stakeholders may also hear and respond to such information.

As with conflict and Brown Act requirements, committee chairs may seek assistance from staff with respect to fair hearing/due process issues, and members are urged to attempt to identify and disclose such issues well in advance of the public hearing.



City of St. Helena

Meeting Ground Rules

1. Start on time
2. Everyone come prepared
3. If you called the meeting, run it well
4. If you are at the meeting, participate
5. Stay on topic
6. One person speaks at a time
7. Be open and honest
8. Actively listen – no side conversations, texting or cellphone use
9. No negative body language or personal attacks
10. End on time



[COMMITTEE NAME]

AGENDA - REGULAR MEETING

[MEETING ADDRESS]

[MEETING DATE AND TIME]

- 1) **ROLL CALL:** [LIST MEMBERS, COUNCIL LIAISON, AND STAFF LIAISON]
- 2) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** [Date of minutes]
- 3) **PUBLIC FORUM:** An opportunity for the public to directly address the [Committee] on items of interest to the public that are not listed on the agenda. Any person addressing the [Committee] should provide his or her name and address, and limit comments to five minutes. Because of restrictions imposed by the Brown Act, the [Committee] may not engage in substantive discussion, nor take action on matters not described on the agenda.
- 4) **SCHEDULED MATTERS:**
[List each item of business to be transacted or discussed at the meeting, with a brief description generally not exceeding 20 words and an approximate time allocated for the item.]
- 5) **REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS BY MEMBERS AND STAFF:** Reports by staff and/or [Committee] members on items of general interest. Brief questions for clarification may be posed and answered, and [Committee] members may request that items be placed on a future agenda. Except under certain circumstances, the Brown Act prohibits any other discussion or action by the [Committee].
[List with approximate time allocated for each item]
- 6) **DISCUSSION OF ITEMS TO BE PLACED ON THE NEXT MEETING AGENDA**
- 7) **ADJOURNMENT**

The next regularly scheduled [Committee] meeting will be held on [Date]. This agenda was posted at City Hall, 1480 Main Street, and at [location where meeting will be held] on [Date].

Cindy Black, Interim City Clerk

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in the meeting, please contact City Hall at (707) 967-2792. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting (28 CFR35.102-35.104 ADA Title II). However, City staff will attempt to assist at any time with accessibility. The City Clerk has equipment to assist those with a hearing impairment.



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
[COMMITTEE NAME]
[Meeting Location]
[Meeting date and time the meeting was called to order]**

2) ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: [List members, Council liaison, and staff liaison. Guests and staff scheduled to give reports or presentations may also be listed. Do not list members of the public in attendance.]

ABSENT: [List members, Council liaison, and staff liaison]

3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES: M/S: [Moved/Seconded: Name/Name]. Ayes: ["All" or individual names]. Noes: ["None" or Names]. Abstain: ["None" or Names].

4) [LIST ALL AGENDA ITEMS and, if a vote was taken, indicate M/S, Ayes, Noes, and Abstain. Although not required, the minutes may briefly discuss major points of the discussion, report or presentation. If there was no discussion of the agenda item, state so. For example:

A. Election of Officers: Susan Smith was elected Chairperson and John Davis was elected Vice Chairperson. M/S: Stuart/Price. Ayes: All. Noes: None. Abstain: None.

B. Green Building Regulations: The group reviewed the subcommittee's research on green building regulations and agreed to make a presentation to the City Council and seek direction from the Council on potential new regulations the Council may wish to adopt. The staff liaison will request an agenda item be placed on the City Council's agenda in January. M/S: Gonzales/Moore. Ayes: All. Noes: None. Abstain: None.

C. Plastic Bag Ban. This item was not discussed.]

5) ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at [Time].

The next regularly scheduled [Committee] meeting will be held on [Date, location and time].

SUBMITTED BY:

Committee Standards of Conduct

Appointment to a City of St. Helena committee provides a unique opportunity for service to the community and leadership in the community. These positions carry an obligation of ethical conduct and personal integrity that will foster public respect, confidence and trust.

The Standards of Conduct are adopted to provide guidance to committee members to assist in fully understanding the role and responsibility of the position.

Responsibilities of Committee Service

In carrying out the responsibilities, committee members shall:

- A. Perform their responsibilities in a manner that is efficient, courteous, responsive and impartial, providing fair and uniform treatment of all person and issues;
- B. Seek the overall public good in all decisions;
- C. Foster effective, courteous and cooperative working relations with fellow members of the committee, the City Council, City staff, and the public;
- D. Serve as a communicator between the community and the City Council and City staff, and facilitate expression of citizen views;
- E. Abide by all applicable Conflict of Interest laws, policies and regulations; Disclose possible conflicts of interest and not participate in any official decision which could materially affect the member's financial or personal interest, nor attempt to influence the vote on any such manner;
- F. Avoid any action which could be construed by an objective person to create the appearance of using public office for personal gain, including use of City stationery or other City resources to obtain or promote personal business, giving preferential treatment to any person or group, or impeding governmental responsiveness or efficiency;
- G. Identify personal opinions and recommendations, avoiding any implication that they are those of the committee unless such position has been duly voted; and
- H. Refuse gifts, service or any promise of future benefit that could be construed to compromise independence of judgment or action as a public official.

Committee Behavioral Norms

- A. Committee members are encouraged to share their opinions throughout the deliberative process including the rationale that led to their position.
- B. The committee will allow sufficient time during meetings so members do not feel rushed and have time to digest what is said and form their own opinion.
- C. Committee members will listen respectfully to each other and the public, and will respond to comments respectfully, avoiding verbal attacks.
- D. The committee will stay positive and productive even when members disagree, demonstrating leadership characteristics appropriate for appointed leaders of the community.
- E. All members will be given an equal opportunity to speak up and discuss the issues.

- F. Committee members will refrain from negative body language in response to comments by committee members or the public.
- G. The Chairperson will start the discussion with a different committee member for each agenda item.
- H. When committee action is contemplated, the Chairperson will ensure that all committee members have had a chance to ask questions and make comments prior to entertaining any motion.
- I. Any committee member who notices disruptive behavior may call "Points of Order" and the Chairperson will address the behavior.

Committee/Staff Relationships and Conduct

- A. Committee members shall recognize that the primary functions of staff liaisons are to execute actions taken by the committee and keep the committee informed.
- B. Each committee member must recognize that only the full committee has power to accept, reject, amend, influence, or otherwise guide and direct staff actions, decisions, recommendations, workloads and schedules, departmental priorities, and the official conduct of City business. Individual committee members shall make no attempt to pressure or influence staff decisions, recommendations, workloads and schedules, and departmental priorities without the prior knowledge and approval of the committee as a whole.
- C. Individual committee members shall not intrude into functions which are the responsibility of staff including, but not limited to, staff decision-making, staff recommendations, work schedules, and other day to day management/administrative operations.
- D. Staff is obligated to take guidance and direction only from the committee as a whole or from the appropriate management superiors as may be the case. Staff is directed to reject any attempts by individual committee members to unduly influence or otherwise pressure them into making, changing or otherwise suppressing staff decisions or recommendations, or changing departmental work schedules and priorities. Staff shall report such attempts to influence them in confidence to their management superiors, who may inform the committee as a whole of such attempts.
- E. Committee members shall make every effort to avoid surprising the staff during public meetings. If there is an issue or a question a committee member has on an agenda item or a matter the committee member intends to bring up at the meeting, that member should contact staff prior to the meeting to alert them to the issue and state the question or concern.
- F. Requests by committee members for information or assistance shall be responded to provided that, in the judgment of their management superior, such requests are not of a magnitude, either in terms of workload or policy, which would require that it more appropriately be assigned to staff through the collective direction of the committee. In terms of making the judgment, the following guidelines shall be considered: 1) the request should be specific and limited in scope so that staff can respond without altering other priorities and with only minimal delay to other assignments; 2) the request should only impose a "one time" rather than on-going work requirement; and 3) the response to the request should not require more than one staff person working on the issue in excess of one to two hours.
- G. When staff response to a committee member's request involves written material which may be of interest to other committee members, the staff liaison will provide copies to all committee members. In deciding items of interest, the staff liaison will consider whether the information is significant, new or otherwise not available to the committee.

CITY OF ST. HELENA

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-16

**RESCINDING RESOLUTION NO. 2018-169
ADOPTING RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR
THE CONDUCT OF COUNCIL MEETINGS
AND CITY COUNCIL STANDARDS OF
CONDUCT, AND RE-ESTABLISHING
RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE
CONDUCT OF COUNCIL MEETINGS AND
RE-ESTABLISHING CITY COUNCIL
STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

RECITALS

- A. WHEREAS, City Council Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Council Meetings are established to provide an effective environment for the City Council to provide leadership; and
- B. WHEREAS, City Council Standards of Conduct are established to provide guidance to Council Members to assist in fully understanding the role and scope of the responsibilities of office; and
- C. WHEREAS, City Council reviews City Council Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Council Meetings and reviews City Council Standards of Conduct and revise as deemed necessary.

RESOLUTION

NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of St. Helena resolves as follows:

- 1. Resolution No. 2018-169 Adopting Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Council Meetings is hereby rescinded; and
- 2. City Council Rules of Procedure and Standards of Conduct are adopted and hereby made part of this resolution. Attached hereby as Exhibit A.

Approved at a Regular Meeting of the St. Helena City Council on February 26, 2019, by the following vote:

Mayor Ellsworth:	Yes
Vice Mayor Dohring:	Yes
Councilmember Chouteau:	Yes
Councilmember Knudsen:	Yes
Councilmember Koberstein:	Yes

APPROVED:



Geoff Ellsworth, Mayor

ATTEST:



Cindy Tzafopoulos, City Clerk

Exhibit A - City Council Rules of Procedure and Standards of Conduct



Exhibit A



CITY COUNCIL

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE CONDUCT OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

&

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

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APPENDIX

Exhibit–*Rosenberg's Rules of Order*: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century

1. PURPOSE

The purpose for establishing City Council Protocols is to provide an effective environment for the City Council to provide leadership. The protocols may be amended by resolution adopted by a majority vote of the Council Members and should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the document remains helpful to the Council by providing a framework for effective leadership.

The protocols set forth herein are not intended to limit the inherent power and general legal authority of the City Council. Any of the protocols herein may be waived by a majority vote of the Council Members when it is deemed that there is good cause to do so based upon the particular facts and circumstances.

1.1 Council-Manager Form of Government

The City of St. Helena operates according to the Council-Manager form of government which vests authority in an elected City Council which, in turn, hires an appointed executive, the City Manager. The City Council is composed of five members elected from the City on a nonpartisan basis to serve overlapping four-year terms. The Mayor is elected at-large to serve a two-year term as presiding officer at City Council meetings and as the official head of the City for legislative and ceremonial purposes. The City Manager is appointed by the City Council and serves at the pleasure of that body.

The City Council is the City's legislative and policy-making body. Acting as a whole, the City Council is responsible for setting the direction of City policy and for adopting ordinances, resolutions and other orders as necessary for governing the City. The City Manager is responsible for the overall administration of the City, which includes implementation of the general policies set by the City Council in addition to the day-to-day operation of all City functions. The City Manager, with the help of the Staff, provides the City Council with the information needed to fulfill its policy-making role.

The Council-Manager form of government separates legislative and executive responsibilities in a manner similar to state and federal governments. This system provides "checks and balances" of both policy and administrative branches of government by limiting the power of each.

1.2 City Council Vision and Mission Statement

Vision Statement

The City of St. Helena will strive to be economically sustainable, and continue to be a family-friendly, diverse and safe community which prudently manages its financial and human resources, continues to upkeep and improve its infrastructure, ensures its water security, provides a full range of housing, business, cultural and recreational opportunities and embraces and retains

its historic, small-town character, beautiful natural environment and high quality of life.

Mission Statement

The City of St. Helena is dedicated to serving the needs and desires of our citizens by:

- Maintaining and improving our short and long-term economic sustainability
- Offering excellent professional services to all customers
- Establishing, improving and maintaining City infrastructure
- Maintaining and encouraging an environmentally sustainable community
- Preserving and embracing the historic, small-town, rural character of St Helena
- Expanding and improving recreational services and facilities and cultural opportunities
- Encouraging a wide range of innovative, well-designed housing available for residents of all ages and income levels
- Facilitating full civic participation and ongoing communication
- Strengthening partnerships with the private, non-profit and public sectors

(See Resolution Number 2016-47, dated April 12, 2016.)

2. RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE CONDUCT OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

2.1 Regular Meeting

The Council shall hold a Regular Meeting on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, except that the Council may by motion at a Regular Meeting and with adequate public notice, either cancel that meeting or reschedule it to some other date.

Regular Meetings shall be held at the Vintage Hall Board Room, 465 Main Street, St. Helena, and shall begin at 6:00 p.m. If it is necessary to hold a closed session prior to the start of a Regular Meeting, the closed session may begin earlier than the normal starting time to allow the Regular Meeting to begin at 6:00 p.m. The closed session shall begin in an open meeting and the Council shall adjourn to closed session.

2.2 Special, Emergency, and Adjourned Meetings

(a) **Special Meetings.** The Mayor or the Vice Mayor in the Mayor's absence or a majority of the members of the Council or the City Manager may at any time call a Special Meeting. At least twenty-four hours before a Special

Meeting, written notice of the meeting stating its time and place and the subjects to be considered shall be (a) delivered to the Mayor and each Councilmember personally or by any other means; (b) posted on the Council's principal bulletin board, City website and place of meeting; and (c) emailed to the agenda subscribers. Only those items of business specified in the notice may be considered at a Special Meeting called in this manner.

(b) **Emergency Meeting.** The Council may hold an Emergency Meeting in emergency situations as set forth in the City's Municipal Code and State Law.

(c) **Adjourned Meeting.** A properly called Regular, Special, or Emergency Meeting may be adjourned to a time and place specified. A copy of the notice of adjournment shall be posted as specified on the door of the place where the meeting was held within twenty-four hours after the time of the adjournment. Further notice need not be given of an adjourned session of a properly called Regular, Special, or Emergency Meeting.

2.3 Regular Meeting Agenda

(a) **Setting and Posting of Agenda.** The agenda of business to come before the Council at a Regular Meeting shall normally be closed at the end of eighteen business days preceding the meeting. Under State Law the agenda for a Regular Meeting must be posted at least seventy-two (72) hours prior to the scheduled convening of the Regular Meeting, and no items may be added to the agenda fewer than seventy-two (72) hours prior to the meeting except as may be allowed by State Law. The City Council endeavors to publish the meeting agenda at least ten days prior to the meeting.

(b) **Placing Items on the Council Agenda.** Each City Council agenda shall specifically provide for a discussion of Future Agenda Items. Any Council Member may request that an item be considered on a future agenda during that portion of the City Council meeting and, upon agreement by a second Council Member concurring that Staff time and City resources should be expended on the item, the item shall be placed on the soonest practical regularly scheduled Council meeting as determined by the City Manager. A member of the public may request that an item be placed on a future agenda during Public Forum or through other communication with a Council Member. Staff reports may not be prepared on Council Member requested items until Council discussion has occurred and direction provided by the Council unless Staff otherwise determines. If Council action is contemplated, proposed action shall be included in the Staff report. The City Manager may also add any item of business to a future agenda in his or her sole discretion.

(c) **Agenda Packet Distribution.** Each Councilmember shall be furnished a copy of the agenda and the package of agenda material by 5:00 p.m., on

the Friday eleven days preceding a Regular Meeting, and the agenda and agenda materials shall be available for public inspection and distribution or copying at that time. Each Councilmember may opt out from receiving a paper agenda and instead receive and review the agenda electronically on a City issued iPad. Any agenda materials not included in the agenda package by 5:00 p.m., that Friday shall be separately identified, and the Council may by majority vote continue such agenda item until the following meeting to allow for proper study of the materials.

(d) **Order of Agenda.** The business of the Council shall be taken up for consideration in substantially the following order except as may be otherwise ordered:

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Public Forum
5. Reports by Staff and City Council, Future Agenda Items and AB 1234 Reports
6. Presentations and Public Recognitions
7. Staff Briefing
8. Consent Items and Items Removed from Consent
9. Public Hearings
10. Old Business
11. New Business
12. Items likely to be placed on the next or future meeting agenda.
13. Adjournment

(e) A copy of the agenda and the package of agenda materials shall be made available for public inspection at City Hall and at the St. Helena Public Library at or near the time they are circulated to the City Council.

2.4 Public Testimony and Comments Before the Council

(a) **Addressing the Council Generally.** Each person addressing the Council may give his or her name and address (optional) in an audible tone of voice for the record. Each person's comments are limited to four minutes except as provided in section (b) regarding land use Public Hearings. In the further interest of time, speakers may be asked to limit their comments to new materials and not repeat what a prior speaker said. Organized groups may choose a single spokesperson who may speak for the group. Speakers may not concede their allotted time to another speaker. The Mayor may extend time for the speaker.

(b) **Addressing Council at Land Use Public Hearings.** An applicant appellant at a land use Public Hearing shall be permitted to address the Council for 15 minutes following the Staff report. If there is a spokesperson for the opposition, the spokesperson shall be permitted to speak for 15 minutes. All other speakers are limited to four minutes each. Applicant shall first be permitted five minutes at close of public comments for rebuttal. If the applicant is the appellee the appellant shall have 15 minutes, the applicant appellee shall have 15 minutes, the appellant five minutes, and the applicant appellee five minutes.

(c) **Presentation by Spokesperson.** Whenever any group of persons wishes to address the Council on the same subject matter, it shall be proper for the Mayor to request that a spokesperson be chosen by the group to address the Council, and, in case additional matters are to be presented at the time by any other member of the group, to limit the number of persons so addressing the Council so as to avoid unnecessary repetition before the Council.

(d) **Irrelevant Testimony.** The Mayor shall rule out of order any testimony not relevant to the agenda item then under discussion.

(e) **Protocol.** The purpose of public testimony is for Councilmembers to benefit from the views of the public. Comments from the public should be directed towards the Council. Councilmembers and Staff should avoid entering into a dialogue with members of the public who may address the Council. Questions raised by members of the public may be referred to Staff.

(f) **Public Comment on Agendized Items.** Members of the public are entitled to speak on any item on the agenda during a Public Hearing on the subject matter opened by the Mayor. Each person is entitled to speak on any agenda item only once at any meeting, and the right to speak at the appropriate time waives any further right to address the Council on that item at that meeting. Participation in debate on any item before the Council shall be limited to members of the Council, although Councilmembers may ask members of the public for additional information.

(g) **Public Comment on Non-Agendized Items.** Members of the public are entitled to speak on matters of municipal concern not on the agenda, during consideration of that portion of the meeting agenda entitled "Public Forum" when that item is called by the Mayor. Each person is entitled to speak on non-agendized items only once at any meeting. Brief questions by Councilmembers for clarifications may be posed and answered, and Councilmembers may make requests that items be placed on future agendas, but in accordance with State Law, no substantive discussion may take place unless and until the matter properly appears on the agenda.

2.5 Roll Call and Voice Votes

A roll call vote shall be taken on the approval of the Consent Calendar, the introduction of ordinances, and the adoption of ordinances, resolutions, and orders for the payment of money. Roll call votes shall be entered in the minutes of the Council showing those members voting yes, those voting no, and those abstaining or absent.

Any other motion may be passed by voice vote provided, however, that any Councilmember may request a roll call vote on any items to be voted on.

2.6 Consent Items

Those items on the agenda considered routine by the City Manager shall be grouped together under "Consent Items" and the recommended actions approved by a single vote of the Council. At the request of any Councilmember or any other person, a Consent Item shall be considered separately following approval of the remaining "Consent Items." Items approved under the heading "Consent Items" will appear in the Council minutes in their proper form, as if approved item by item.

2.7 Reports

Under the agenda heading "Reports" the City Manager, other City Staff, and Councilmembers may make reports on matters not on the agenda. Also at this time, Councilmembers or Staff may identify issues or agenda items that need to be addressed by the City Attorney during the meeting, and may propose future agenda items.

2.8 Closing Time of Council Meetings

Council meetings shall adjourn by 9:00 p.m. However, the Council may by majority vote extend the meeting up to an additional thirty minutes (9:30 p.m.) if the Council deems such extension necessary. A unanimous Council vote shall be required to extend the meeting past 9:30 p.m. and adjourn by 10:00 p.m. Otherwise, the meeting shall be adjourned to another day acceptable to the Council, or unfinished business may be continued to the next regular meeting.

2.9 Old Business

"Old Business" will include uncompleted items carried over from a prior meeting agenda and placed under this agenda heading for consideration.

2.10 New Business

The Council shall not consider any resolution, motion, or matter which does not affect the conduct of the business of the City of St. Helena or its corporate powers or duties as a municipal corporation nor shall the Council consider any resolution or motion supporting or disapproving any legislation or action pending in the Legislature of the State of California, the Congress of the United States or before

any officer or agency of the State or Nation unless such proposed legislation or action, if adopted, will affect the conduct of the municipal business or the powers and duties of the City of St. Helena or its officers or employees as such.

2.11 Office of the Mayor

The Mayor shall preside at meetings of the Council, shall be entitled to vote on all matters, and shall be considered a Councilmember for all purposes, including the determination of whether a quorum is present. The Mayor will recognize members that wish to speak.

The Mayor shall have the following powers:

- a) To rule motions in or out of order, including any motion patently offered for obstructive or dilatory purposes;
- b) To enforce the Council's rules regarding public testimony and to determine whether a speaker has gone beyond reasonable standards of courtesy in his or her remarks and to entertain and rule on objections from other members on this ground;
- c) To ensure that the public has reasonable opportunity to be heard;
- d) To entertain and answer questions of parliamentary law or procedure;
- e) To call a brief recess at any time;
- f) To adjourn in an emergency;
- g) To appoint a Vice Mayor subject to Council approval who shall serve during the term of the Mayor, and becomes the Mayor Pro Tempore in the Mayor's absence.

2.12 Office of Mayor Pro Tempore

A Councilmember who serves as Mayor pro tempore shall be entitled to vote on all matters and shall be considered a Councilmember for all purposes, including the determination of whether a quorum is present. In the Mayor's absence, the Mayor pro tempore shall have the Mayor's powers and duties. If the Mayor should become physically or mentally unable to perform the duties of his or her office, the other Councilmembers may by unanimous vote declare the Mayor is incapacitated and confer the Mayor's powers and duties on the Mayor pro tempore.

When the Mayor declares that he or she is no longer incapacitated, and a majority of the Council concurs, the Mayor shall resume the exercise of his or her powers and duties. If both the Mayor and the Mayor pro tempore are absent from a meeting, the Council may elect from among its members a temporary chair to preside at the meeting.

2.13 Action by the Council

Action by the Council shall be by motions made and voted upon. A motion shall require a second. The Mayor and any other Councilmember may make or second a motion. A substantive motion is out of order while another substantive motion is pending.

2.14 Adoption by Majority Vote

A motion shall be adopted by a majority of the votes cast, a quorum being present, unless otherwise required by these rules or the laws of California. Resolutions, orders for the payment of money, and all ordinances require at least three votes for passage.

2.15 Discussion

The City Council shall address an agenda item as follow:

- (a) Staff shall introduce the agenda item and present the Staff report.
- (b) City Council shall ask questions of Staff.
- (c) The Mayor will invite public comment on the item.
- (d) Having received all public testimony, the Council will deliberate on the matter.
- (e) If appropriate, the Mayor will entertain a motion, including any motion proposed by the Mayor.
- (f) If a motion has received a second, the Mayor shall state the motion and if any Council Member wishes for the discussion, open for additional Council discussion.
- (g) The Mayor shall preside over the discussion according to the following general principles:
 - 1. The maker of the motion is entitled to speak first;
 - 2. A person who has not spoken on the issue shall be recognized before someone who has already spoken;
 - 3. To the extent possible, the discussion shall alternate between opponents and proponents of the measure.

2.16 Ratification of Actions

To the extent permitted by law, the Council may ratify actions taken on its behalf but without its prior approval. A motion to ratify is a substantive motion.

2.17 Procedural Motions

- (a) In addition to substantive proposals, the following procedural motions, and no others, shall be in order. Unless otherwise noted, each motion is debatable, may be amended, and requires a majority of the votes cast, a quorum being present, for adoption.
- (b) To Adjourn. The motion may be made only at the conclusion of action of a pending substantive matter; it cannot interrupt deliberation of a pending matter.
- (c) To Take a Brief Recess.
- (d) Call to Follow the Agenda. The motion must be made at the first reasonable opportunity, or the right to make it is waived for the out-of-order item in question.
- (e) To Suspend the Rules. The motion requires for adoption a vote of a majority of the quorum of the Council. The Council may not suspend provisions of the rules that are state requirements imposed by law on the Council.
- (f) To Divide a Complex Motion and Consider It by Paragraph.
- (g) To Call the Previous Question. The motion is not in order until every member has had an opportunity to speak once.
- (h) To Continue an Item to a Future Meeting Certain.
- (i) To Refer to Staff for Action.
- (j) To Amend. An amendment to a motion must be pertinent to the subject matter of the motion. An amendment is improper if the amended motion has the same effect as rejection of the original motion. A motion may be amended, and that amendment may be amended, but no further amendments may be made until the last amendment is disposed of by a vote.
- (k) To Reconsider. The motion must be made by a member who voted with the prevailing side, and only at the meeting during which the original vote was taken, including any continuation of that meeting through adjournment to a time and place certain, or at the next Regular Meeting unless intervening actions taken based on the original action make such reconsideration impracticable. The motion cannot interrupt deliberation on a pending matter, but is in order at any time before final adjournment of the meeting.
- (l) To Rescind or Repeal a Previous Action. A motion to rescind or repeal a previous action is not in order if the rescission or repeal is forbidden by law or made inappropriate by virtue of actions taken in accordance with the previous action.
- (m) To call for a Straw Vote. The Mayor, at the Mayor's discretion, may call for a Straw Vote among members on any item prior to inviting public testimony or Council comment.

2.18 Withdrawal of Motion

A motion may be withdrawn by the introducer at any time before a vote, with or without the consent of any “seconder” of the motion. However, any other Councilmember may ask to be considered the introducer of the motion and, if again seconded, debate may continue without further interruption.

2.19 Duty to Vote

Every member must vote on every item unless prevented from doing so by virtue of an actual or potential conflict of interest under applicable State Law. Any member who believes he or she has a conflict or potential conflict of interest must announce such at the initiation of discussion or when such conflict or potential conflict becomes apparent, and shall refrain from any part in the debate, deliberations, or voting on that issue, except as allowed by State Law.

2.20 Introduction and Passage of Ordinance

A proposed ordinance shall be deemed to be introduced on the date the subject matter is first voted on by the Council. The Mayor shall read the title of the ordinance, after which a roll call vote shall be taken to introduce the ordinance. The City Clerk shall then read the ordinance in its entirety unless such reading is waived by a separate motion adopted by unanimous vote of the Councilmembers present. An ordinance, other than an urgency, may not be passed within five days of its introduction or alteration. Corrections of typographical or clerical errors are not alterations.

2.21 Closed Sessions

- (a) The Council may hold closed sessions only as provided for by law and according to the provisions herein.
- (b) As part of any regular or special City Council meeting as appropriate, the City Council, the City Attorney, and relevant Staff may discuss and agree upon the need for any future closed sessions, including the legal authority for the closed session and the nature of the matter to be discussed, in adequate detail to meaningfully inform the public while maintaining required confidentiality and any applicable attorney-client privilege. Where the City Manager and City Attorney agree that the nature of a matter requires consideration in closed session, the requirement for prior open session discussion shall not apply.
- (c) The City Council agenda for any regular or special Council meeting shall include general information about closed sessions as follows:

The City Council will convene in open session at the stated time, but will then adjourn to address any closed

sessions items listed on the agenda. The public is invited to address the Council with comment on any listed closed session item immediately prior to Council's adjournment into closed session or consistent with any other provisions permitting public comment. The Council will reconvene in Public Session at 6:00 p.m. or at the first Council meeting following any closed session. At that time, if appropriate and as required under the Brown Act, any actions taken during the preceding closed session will be announced by the City Attorney or Mayor. If necessary, the Council may reconvene in closed session to continue discussion of listed items following the completion of open session business.

- (d) The City Council agenda for any regular or special Council meeting at which the Council will adjourn to closed session shall provide notice of that closed session as provided for under the Brown Act and shall include a narrative description of the legal authority for the closed session and the nature of the matter to be discussed in adequate detail to inform the public while maintaining required confidentiality or any applicable attorney-client privilege. Reporting out of closed session shall be consistent with the requirements of Brown Act, and may be of greater detail than required when the disclosure of such detail is not inconsistent with maintaining required confidentiality and any applicable attorney-client privilege.

2.22 Quorum

A majority of the actual membership of the Council, including the Mayor but excluding vacant seats, shall constitute a quorum. A member who has withdrawn from a meeting without being excused by majority vote of the remaining members present shall be counted as present for purposes of determining whether or not a quorum is present.

2.23 Telephonic Attendance Of Council Members At Council Meetings

- (a) The City Council Procedures provisions concerning Telephonic Attendance shall apply to all Boards and Commissions as well as the City Council. Requests by Council Members to attend a Council meeting via telephonic appearance are actively discouraged. Telephonic attendance shall only be permitted in the event of extraordinary events such as a medical, family or similar emergency requiring a Council Member's absence. In addition, at least a quorum of the Council must participate from a location within the City (Government Code Section 54953(b)(3)).

- (b) If these two threshold requirements are met, the Council Member who will be appearing telephonically must ensure that:
 - 1. The meeting agenda identifies the teleconference location and is posted at that location in an area that is accessible and visible 24 hours a day for at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.
 - 2. The teleconference location is open and fully accessible to the public, and fully accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act, throughout the entire meeting. These requirements apply to private residences, hotel rooms, and similar facilities, all of which must remain fully open and accessible throughout the meeting, without requiring identification or registration.
 - 3. The teleconference technology used is open and fully accessible to all members of the public, including those with disabilities.
 - 4. Members of the public who attend the meeting at the teleconference location have the same opportunity to address the Council from the remote location that they would if they were present in Council Chambers.
 - 5. The teleconference location must not require an admission fee or any payment for attendance.
 - 6. If the Council Member determines that any or all of these requirements cannot be met, he or she shall not participate in the meeting via teleconference.
- (c) Approved Teleconference Guidelines for Council Members:
 - 1. One-week advance written notice must be given by the Council Member to the City Clerk's office; the notice must include the address at which the teleconferenced meeting will occur, the address the Council packet should be mailed to, who is to initiate the phone call to establish the teleconference connection, and the phone number of the teleconference location. Cellular telephones shall not be used to participate in teleconferenced meetings.
 - 2. The Council Member is responsible for posting the Council agenda in the remote location, or having the agenda posted by somebody at the location and confirming that posting has occurred. The City Clerk will assist, if necessary, by faxing or mailing the agenda to whatever address or fax number the Council Member requests; however, it is the Council Member's responsibility to ensure that the agenda arrives and is posted. If the Council Member will need the assistance of the City Clerk in delivery of the agenda, the fax number or address must be included in the one-week advance written notice above.

3. The Council Member must ensure that the location will be publicly accessible while the meeting is in progress.
4. The Council Member must state at the beginning of the Council meeting that the 72-hour posting requirement was met at the location and that the location is publicly accessible. The Council Member also must describe the location. Furthermore, the City Clerk will provide Council with a quarterly report detailing the telephone charges associated with teleconferenced meetings.

2.24 Public Hearings

Public Hearings shall be scheduled and notice published without any action required by the City Council, excepting that the Council may, if it so desires, scheduled a Public Hearing on an item of interest for a date certain. In order to accommodate members of the public responding to a noticed Public Hearing, such Hearings will, to the extent practicable, begin at 6:00 p.m. At the time designated for the Public Hearing, or soon after as is practicable, the Mayor shall direct the attention of the Council Members to the Staff report and Staff may respond to questions from Council members, after which the Mayor shall formally open the Public Hearing and members of the public shall be allowed to speak in accordance with the rules set forth elsewhere in these Rules of Procedure. When the allotted time expires, or when no one wishes to speak who has not done so, the Mayor shall declare the hearing closed.

Following the close of the Public Hearing, the Council may discuss or take action on the matter in accordance with these rules. The Mayor may in his or her discretion allow questions and/or comments from the public after close of Public Hearing.

2.25 Appointments to Committees and Boards

The City Clerk posts a Notice of Vacancy in the City designated posting locations, the City's website and sends a Media Release to the St. Helena Star advertising vacancies to Commissions, Committees and Boards.

Applicants must submit a completed application to the City Clerk and shall be interviewed by the Council at a special meeting prior to a regular meeting. Applicants are requested to list references on their applications and individual Council Members may contact those references as part of the interview process. Council Members contacting references should disclose this information during the appointment process.

Council reviews applicants for appointments to Commissions, Committees and Boards based on interviews and qualifications. Council shall rank all applicants from highest to lowest and appoint by ballot process. Mayor shall nominate applicants and appointments are subject to approval by the majority of Council.

Depending on the qualifications of the applicants and the needs of the City, there may be times when the City Council does not appoint an applicant who has applied. If an applicant is not appointed, the City Clerk will automatically readvertise for the vacant position(s) to seek additional applicants.

2.26 Rosenberg's Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century

All procedural matters not otherwise provided for in or controlled by state law or by any ordinance, resolution, rule or regulation of the City shall be governed by Rosenberg's Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century (attached as Exhibit). However, no ordinance, resolution, or other action of the Council shall be invalidated or the legality thereof otherwise affected by the failure or omission of the Council to observe or follow such rules. Certain procedures relating to motions, agenda item discussion, debate, and courtesies contained in *Rosenberg's Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century* are incorporated into this document, except to the extent they are modified by this Protocol document.

3. CITY COUNCIL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

3.1 Policy Purpose

The St. Helena City Council adopts this Code of Ethics and Conduct to assure that all elected and appointed officials, while exercising their office, conduct themselves in a manner that will instill public confidence and trust in the fair operation and integrity of St. Helena's City government.

3.2 Ethics

The citizens and businesses of St. Helena are entitled to have fair, ethical and accountable local government. To this end, the public should have full confidence that their elected and appointed officials:

- Comply with both the letter and spirit of the laws and policies affecting the operations of government;
- Are independent, impartial and fair in their judgment and actions;
- Use their public office for the public good, not for personal gain; and
- Conduct public deliberations and processes openly, unless required by law to be confidential, in an atmosphere of respect and civility.

Therefore, members of the City Council, City Treasurer, and City Clerk and of all Boards, Committees and Commissions shall conduct themselves in accordance with the following ethical standards:

- (a) **Act in the Public Interest.** Recognizing that stewardship of the public interest must be their primary concern, members will work for the common good of the people of St. Helena and not for any private or personal

interest, and they will assure fair and equal treatment of all persons, claims and transactions coming before them.

(b) **Comply with both the spirit and the letter of the Law and City Policy.** Members shall comply with the laws of the nation, the State of California and the City of St. Helena in the performance of their public duties.

(c) **Conduct of Members.** The professional and personal conduct of members while exercising their office must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Members shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of Council, Boards, Committees and Commissions, the Staff or public.

(d) **Respect for Process.** Members shall perform their duties in accordance with the processes and rules of order established by the City Council.

(e) **Conduct at Public Meetings.** Members shall prepare themselves for public issues, listen courteously and attentively to all public discussions before the body, and focus on the business at hand.

(f) **Decisions Based on Merit.** Members shall base their decisions on the merits and substance of the matter at hand, rather than on unrelated considerations. When making adjudicative decisions (those decisions where the member is called upon to determine and apply facts peculiar to an individual case), members shall maintain an open mind until the conclusion of the hearing on the matter and shall base their decisions on the facts presented at the hearing and the law.

(g) **Communication.** Members shall publicly disclose substantive information that is relevant to a matter under consideration by the body which they may have received from sources outside of the public decision-making process.

(h) **Conflict of Interest.** In order to assure their independence and impartiality on behalf of the common good and compliance with conflict of interest laws, members shall use their best efforts to refrain from creating an appearance of impropriety in their actions and decisions. Members shall not use their official positions to influence government decisions in which they have (a) a material financial interest, (b) an organizational responsibility or personal relationship which may give the appearance of a conflict of interest, or (c) a strong personal bias.

A member who has a potential conflict of interest regarding a particular decision shall disclose the matter to the City Attorney and reasonably cooperate with the City Attorney to analyze the potential conflict. If advised by the City Attorney to seek advice from the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) or other appropriate state agency, a member shall not participate in a decision unless and until he or she has requested and received advice allowing the member to participate. A member shall diligently pursue obtaining such advice. The member shall provide the Mayor and the City Attorney a copy of any written request or advice, and conform his or her participation to the advice given. In providing assistance to members, the City Attorney represents the City and not individual members.

In accordance with the law, members shall disclose investments, interests in real property, sources of income, and gifts; and if they have a conflict of interest regarding a particular decision, shall not, once the conflict is ascertained, participate in the decision and shall not discuss or comment on the matter in any way to any person including other members unless otherwise permitted by law.

(i) **Gifts and Favors.** Members shall not take any special advantage of services or opportunities for personal gain, by virtue of their public office that is not available to the public in general. They shall refrain from accepting any gifts, favors or promises of future benefits which might compromise their independence of judgment or action or give the appearance of being compromised.

(j) **Confidential Information.** Members must maintain the confidentiality of all written materials and verbal information provided to members which is confidential or privileged. Members shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization, nor use such information to advance their personal, financial or other private interests.

(k) **Use of Public Resources.** Members shall not use public resources which are not available to the public in general (e.g., City Staff time, equipment, supplies or facilities) for private gain or for personal purposes not otherwise authorized by law.

(l) **Representation of Private Interests.** In keeping with their role as stewards of the public interest, members of Council shall not appear on behalf of the private interests of third parties before the Council or any Board, Committee, Commission or proceeding of the City, nor shall members of Boards, Committees and Commissions appear before their own bodies or before the Council on behalf of the private interests of third parties on matters related to the areas of service of their bodies.

(m) **Advocacy.** Members shall represent the official policies or positions of the City Council, Board, Committee or Commission to the best of their ability when designated as delegates for this purpose. When presenting their individual opinions and positions, members shall explicitly state they do not represent their body or the City of St. Helena, nor will they allow the inference that they do. Councilmembers and Board, Committee and Commission members have the right to endorse candidates for all Council seats or other elected offices. It is inappropriate to mention or display endorsements during Council meetings, or Board, Committee and Commission meetings, or other official City meetings.

(n) **Policy Role of Members.** Members shall respect and adhere to the council-manager structure of St. Helena City government as outlined in the St. Helena City Code. In this structure, the City Council determines the policies of the City with the advice, information and analysis provided by City Staff, Boards, Committees and Commissions, and the public. Except as provided by the City Code, members shall not interfere with the administrative functions of the City or the professional duties of City Staff; nor shall they impair the ability of Staff to implement Council policy decisions.

(o) **Independence of Boards, Committees and Commissions.** Because of the value of the independent advice of Boards, Committees and Commissions to the public decision-making process, members of Council shall refrain from using their position to unduly influence the deliberations or outcomes of Board, Committee and Commission proceedings.

(p) **Positive Work Place Environment.** Members shall support the maintenance of a positive and constructive work place environment for City employees and for citizens and businesses dealing with the City. Members shall recognize their special role in dealings with City employees to in no way create the perception of inappropriate direction to Staff.

3.3 Code of Ethics and Conduct

The Code of Ethics and Conduct are designed to describe the manner in which elected and appointed officials should treat one another, City Staff, constituents, and others they come into contact with while representing the City of St. Helena.

(a) Elected and Appointed Officials' Conduct with Each Other in Public Meetings

Elected and appointed officials are individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Despite this

diversity, all have chosen to serve in public office in order to preserve and protect the present and the future of the community. In all cases, this common goal should be acknowledged even though individuals may not agree on every issue.

1. Honor the role of the chair in maintaining order

It is the responsibility of the chair to keep the comments of members on track during public meetings. Members should honor efforts by the chair to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the chair's actions, those objections should be voiced politely and with reason, following procedures outlined in parliamentary procedure.

2. Practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate

Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of debate by a free democracy in action. Free debate does not require nor justify, however, public officials to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments.

3. Avoid personal comments that could offend other members

If a member is personally offended by the remarks of another member, the offended member should make notes of the actual words used and call for a "point of personal privilege" that challenges the other member to justify or apologize for the language used. The chair will maintain control of this discussion.

4. Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches

Members have a public stage and have the responsibility to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole.

(b) Elected and Appointed Officials' Conduct with the Public in Public Meetings

Making the public feel welcome is an important part of the democratic process. No signs of partiality, prejudice or disrespect should be evident on the part of individual members toward an individual participating in a public forum. Every effort should be made to be fair and impartial in listening to public testimony.

1. Be welcoming to speakers and treat them with care and gentleness.

- a. While questions of clarification may be asked, the official's primary role during public testimony is to listen.
- 2. *Be fair and equitable in allocating public hearing time to individual speakers.*
 - a. The chair will determine and announce limits on speakers at the start of the public hearing process.
- 3. *Practice active listening*
 - a. It is disconcerting to speakers to have members not look at them when they are speaking. It is fine to look down at documents or to make notes, but reading for a long period of time or gazing around the room gives the appearance of disinterest. Members shall try to be conscious of facial expressions, and avoid those that could be interpreted as "smirking," disbelief, anger or boredom.
- 4. *Maintain an open mind*
 - a. Members of the public deserve an opportunity to influence the thinking of elected and appointed officials.
- 5. *Ask for clarification, but avoid debate and argument with the public*
 - a. Only the chair – not individual members – can interrupt a speaker during a presentation. However, a member can ask the chair for a point of order if the speaker is off the topic or exhibiting behavior or language the member finds disturbing.

(c) Elected and Appointed Officials' Conduct with City Staff

Governance of a City relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials, who set policy, appointed officials who advise the elected, and City Staff who implement and administer the Council's policies. Therefore, every effort should be made to be cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by each individual for the good of the community.

- 1. *Treat all Staff as professionals*
 - a. Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual is expected. Poor behavior towards Staff is not acceptable.
- 2. *Do not disrupt City Staff from their jobs*
 - a. Elected and appointed officials should not disrupt City Staff while they are in meetings, on the phone, or engrossed in performing their job functions in order to

have their individual needs met. Do not attend City Staff meetings unless requested by Staff – even if the elected or appointed official does not say anything, his or her presence implies support, shows partiality, may intimidate Staff, and hampers Staff's ability to do their job objectively.

3. *Never publicly criticize an individual employee*

- a. Elected and appointed officials should never express concerns about the performance of a City employee in public, to the employee directly, or to the employee's manager. Comments about Staff performance should only be made to the City Manager through private correspondence or conversation. Appointed officials should make their comments regarding Staff to the City Manager or the Mayor.

4. *Do not get involved in administrative functions*

- a. Elected and appointed officials acting in their individual capacity must not attempt to influence City Staff on the making of appointments, awarding of contracts, selecting of consultants, processing of development applications, or granting of City licenses and permits.

5. *Do not solicit political support from Staff*

- a. Elected and appointed officials should not solicit any type of political support (financial contributions, display of posters or lawn signs, name on support list, etc.) from City Staff. City Staff may, as private citizens with constitutional rights, support political candidates but all such activities must be done away from the workplace.

6. *No Attorney-Client Relationship*

- a. Members shall not seek to establish an attorney-client relationship with the City Attorney, including his or her Staff and attorneys contracted to work on behalf of the City. The City Attorney represents the City and not individual members. Members who consult with the City Attorney cannot enjoy or establish an attorney-client relationship with the attorney.

(d) Council Conduct with Boards, Committees and Commissions

The City has established several Boards, Committees and Commissions as a means of gathering more community input. Citizens who serve on Boards, Committees and Commissions become more involved in government and

serve as advisors to the City Council. They are a valuable resource to the City's leadership and should be treated with appreciation and respect.

1. *Respect Role of Liaison to City's Boards, Committees and Commissions*

Several of the City's Boards, Committees and Commissions have a Council Member who serves as its Council liaison. The City Council will collectively review and approve liaison appointments annually. Council Members serving as liaisons should act as an advisor and resource to committee/board/commission members and the committee/board/commission's Staff liaison when issues regarding process, procedure, attendance, interpersonal or public relations arise.

2. *Respect that Boards, Committees and Commissions serve the community, not individual Councilmembers*

The City Council appoints individuals to serve on Boards, Committees and Commissions, and it is the responsibility of Boards, Committees and Commissions to follow policy established by the Council. But Board, Committee and Commission members do not report to individual Councilmembers (whether or not they are serving as liaisons), nor should Councilmembers feel they have the power or right to threaten Board, Committee and Commission members with removal if they disagree about an issue. Appointment and re-appointment to a Board, Committee or Commission should be based on such criteria as expertise, ability to work with Staff and the public, and commitment to fulfilling official duties. A Board, Committee or Commission appointment should not be used as a political "reward."

3. *Be respectful of diverse opinions*

A primary role of Boards, Committees and Commissions is to represent many points of view in the community and to provide the Council with advice based on a full spectrum of concerns and perspectives. Councilmembers may have a closer working relationship with some individuals serving on Boards, Committees and Commissions, but must be fair and respectful of all citizens serving on Boards, Committees and Commissions.

4. *Keep political support away from public forums*

Board, Committee and Commission members may offer political support to a Councilmember, but not in a public forum while conducting official duties. Conversely, Councilmembers may support Board, Committee and Commission members who are running for office, but not in an official forum in their capacity as a Councilmember.

(e) Elected and Appointed Officials' Conduct With Each Other and the Public in Private Encounters

1. Continue Respectful Behavior in Private

The same level of respect and consideration of differing points of view that is deemed appropriate for public discussions, and set forth above in subsections (a) through (d), should be maintained in private conversations, including telephone calls, texts, e-mails or other forms of communication. Council Members and appointed officials shall refrain from abusive conduct, intimidation, bullying tactics, personal charges, or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members or the public.

2. Be Aware of the Insecurity (Non-Confidentiality) of Written Notes, Texts, Voicemail and E-mail

Technology allows words written or said without much forethought to be distributed wide and far. Would you feel comfortable to have this note faxed to others? How would you feel if this voicemail message was played on a speakerphone in a full office? What would happen if this E-mail or text message were forwarded to others? Written notes, voicemail messages, texts and E-mail should be treated as potentially "public" communication.

3. Understand that Even Private Conversations can have Public Presence

Elected and appointed officials are always on display — their actions, demeanor, fitness, mannerisms, language and timing and form of communication are monitored by people around them that they may not know. Lunch table conversations will be eavesdropped upon, parking lot debates will be watched, late-night e-mails will be questioned and casual comments between individuals before and after public meetings noticed.

3.4 Enforcement and Sanctions

(a) Acknowledgement of Code of Ethics and Conduct

Upon assuming office each Councilmember, and each Board, Committee and Commission Member ("Member"), shall sign a statement affirming that he or she has been provided with and has read the Code of Ethics and Conduct. Each Councilmember, Board, Committee and Commission Member, shall adhere to the Code of Ethics and Conduct as well as the Council's Rules of Procedure. Councilmembers who do not sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understand the Code of Ethics and Conduct shall be ineligible for intergovernmental assignments or Council subcommittees. Board, Committee and Commission members who do not sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understand the Code of Ethics and Conduct are not eligible to hold office.

(b) Ethics Training for Local Officials

Councilmembers, City Treasurer, City Clerk, Board, Committee and Commission Members shall report annually to the City Clerk with respect to his or her compliance with State or City mandated requirements for ethics training. Councilmembers, City Treasurer, City Clerk, Board, Committee and Commission Members who are out of compliance with State or City mandated requirements for ethics training shall not represent the City on intergovernmental assignments or Council subcommittees and may be subject to sanctions.

(c) Behavior and Conduct

The St. Helena Code of Ethics and Conduct expresses standards of ethical conduct expected for members of the St. Helena City Council, Boards, Committees and Commissions. Each Member him or herself has the primary responsibility to assure that he or she understands and satisfies the ethical standards, so that the public can continue to have full confidence in the integrity of government. The chairs of Boards, Committees and Commissions and the Mayor and Council have the additional responsibility to intervene when actions of Members that appear to be in violation of the Code of Ethics and Conduct are brought to their attention. Without violating Brown Act serial meeting requirements, individual Members should point out to the offending Member perceived infractions of the Code of Ethics and Conduct. If the offenses continue, then the process under 3.4(e) 1-10 shall govern.

(d) Council Authority

Under California law, the Council does not have the legal authority to remove Members elected or appointed to the City Council or to otherwise deprive them of their office. However, as provided in Section 3.4(e) 9., a majority of the Councilmembers may remove a Councilmember from any or all Council honorary and/or ceremonial positions and ad-hoc and standing committees, as well as from positions with other governmental agencies or other organizations they hold by virtue of appointment by the City Council.

(e) Process to Address Alleged Violation of Code of Ethics and Conduct

1. *Complaint.* Where any person has substantial evidence that a Member has materially violated the Code of Ethics and Conduct, he or she may file a written statement with the City Clerk who will then provide it to the City Council, and the affected Member. The name of the complainant shall initially be redacted and kept confidential and not disclosed until it has been determined as provided in Section 3.4(e) 2 that there is substantial evidence that the Member has materially violated the Code of Ethics and Conduct.

“Substantial evidence” means evidence that reasonably supports a conclusion. It does not mean simply any evidence, nor does it include mere opinions. It must be reasonable in nature, credible, and of solid value.

2. *Hearing Officer.* Upon receipt of a Complaint as provided in Section 3.4(e) 1., or upon the direction of the City Council, the Mayor, in consultation with the City Manager, shall make a preliminary determination whether there is substantial evidence to support a conclusion that a Member has materially violated the Code of Ethics and Conduct, thereby warranting the further proceedings below. If the Mayor either submitted the Complaint or is the subject of the Complaint, the Vice Mayor (and who is not the subject of the complaint) shall make the preliminary determination as provided above.

If the Mayor (or, where the Mayor is disqualified as set forth above, the Vice Mayor) makes the initial determination that there is substantial evidence to support a conclusion that a Member has materially violated the Code of Ethics and Conduct, thereby warranting the further proceedings, he or she, in consultation with the City Manager, shall appoint an independent Hearing Officer to review and investigate the Complaint. If the Mayor either submitted the Complaint or is the subject of the Complaint, the Vice Mayor (and who is not the subject of the complaint) shall appoint the Hearing Officer as provided above.

In the event both the Mayor and Vice Mayor are disqualified as set forth above or otherwise unable to carry out the duties under this Section, the Council member with the longest tenure shall do so. If two or more Council members have equal tenure, the Council member (who is not the subject of the Complaint) shall be selected by a process of drawing straws supervised by the City Clerk.

3. *Investigation.* To the extent reasonably practicable, the Hearing Officer shall investigate and report, within not more than thirty (30) days, as to whether there is substantial evidence in support of an allegation that a Member has materially violated the Code of Ethics and Conduct. If the Hearing Officer concludes that there is not substantial evidence to support an alleged violation, or that the violation was not material, he or she shall so report to the Council and the matter shall be deemed dismissed unless the Council directs that a public hearing be held pursuant to Section 3.4(e) 5. If the Hearing Officer concludes that there is substantial evidence to support an alleged material violation of the Code of Ethics and Conduct, he or she shall issue a report ("Report") to the City Council and the Member. The Hearing Officer shall allow the affected Member a reasonable opportunity to provide any written comments, evidence and/or arguments which the Hearing Officer shall consider in the investigation and Report.
4. *Enforcement.* The City Council, in its sole discretion, shall enforce the Code of Ethics and Conduct against Members depending upon the extent and severity of the violation by means of either (i) a warning (ii) a written reprimand; (iii) censure; (iv) removal from assignments; or (v) other action as deemed appropriate to the City Council, including without limitation disavowal and/or disapproval of the Member's violation and/or other action and/or statement. The following procedure shall be utilized:

5. *Receipt of Report.* As reasonably practicable, within 30 days after receipt of the Report, the Council will hold a public hearing after which it will determine, among any other determination the Council may deem appropriate, whether the Complaint should be dismissed, a warning should be issued, a written reprimand should be issued, censure issued, or the Member should be removed from his or her office (only for Members other than Council members) or assignments. The City shall provide written notice of the public hearing and opportunity to be heard to the affected Member. The City Council determination shall be set forth in written findings that the Council may direct staff to prepare for subsequent Council approval.
6. *Dismissal.* Where the Council, based on the Report and any statement from the affected Member, determines that it is clear that no violation occurred or that only a trivial or de minimus violation occurred, or that the Complaint was motivated by revenge or other improper motive, the Council may dismiss the Complaint.
7. *Warning.* Where the Council, based on the Report and any statement from the affected Member, determines that there is some evidence that only a minor violation or a questionable practice has occurred, the Council may issue a written warning to the affected Member specifying the violation(s) and requesting corrective action.
8. *Reprimand.* Where the Council, based on the Report, any statement from the affected Member, and other evidence accepted, determines that there is substantial evidence that the Member has materially violated one or more provisions of the Code of Ethics and Conduct, the Council may adopt a resolution reprimanding the affected Member for their conduct, stating that any violations shall cease, and requesting corrective action. The affected Member may file a rebuttal to the Reprimand with the City Clerk which will become a matter of public record.
9. *Censure.* Where the Council, based on the Report, any statement from the affected Member, and other evidence accepted at a public hearing of the matter, determines that there is substantial evidence that the Member has materially violated one or more provisions of the Code of Ethics and Conduct, and that such violation(s) impugn the integrity or dignity of the City or that such violations are egregious or chronic in nature, then the Council may adopt a resolution censuring the affected Member by condemning his or her actions, removing the Member from all appointive positions representing the City in front of other governments and agencies, demoting the affected Commissioner, Committee or Board member appointed by the City Council who holds a position of chairperson or vice chairperson, stating that the violations shall cease, and demanding corrective actions. The affected Member may file a rebuttal to the Censure with the City Clerk which will become a matter of public record.
10. *Removal from Office.* Notwithstanding any of the provisions in this Section 3.4, the City Council may remove any Commissioner, Committee or Board member

appointed by the City Council at its pleasure, and nothing in the Code of Ethics and Conduct or these rules effects or diminishes such power nor vests such Commissioners or Board members with any additional rights.

3.5 Implementation

The Code of Ethics and Conduct is intended to be self-enforcing and is an expression of the standards of conduct for members expected by the City. It therefore becomes most effective when members are thoroughly familiar with it and embrace its provisions.

For this reason, this document shall be included in the regular orientations for candidates for City Council, City Treasurer, City Clerk, applicants to Board, Committee and Commissions, and newly elected and appointed officials. Members entering office shall sign a statement (example below) acknowledging they have read and understand the Code of Ethics and Conduct. In addition, the Code of Ethics and Conduct shall be periodically reviewed by the City Council, Boards, Committees and Commissions, and updated it as necessary.

Example:

I affirm that I have read and understand the City of St. Helena Code of Ethics and Conduct for Elected and Appointed Officials.

Signature

Date



Appendix E

Open & Public V

A GUIDE TO THE RALPH M. BROWN ACT

REVISED APRIL 2016



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Chapter 1

IT IS THE PEOPLE'S BUSINESS



The right of access

Two key parts of the Brown Act have not changed since its adoption in 1953. One is the Brown Act's initial section, declaring the Legislature's intent:

"In enacting this chapter, the Legislature finds and declares that the public commissions, boards and councils and the other public agencies in this State exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of the law that their actions be taken openly and that their deliberations be conducted openly."

*"The people of this State do not yield their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them. The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know. The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control over the instruments they have created."*¹

The people reconfirmed that intent 50 years later in the November 2004 election by adopting Proposition 59, amending the California Constitution to include a public right of access to government information:

*"The people have the right of access to information concerning the conduct of the people's business, and, therefore, the meetings of public bodies and the writings of public officials and agencies shall be open to public scrutiny."*²

The Brown Act's other unchanged provision is a single sentence:

*"All meetings of the legislative body of a local agency shall be open and public, and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting of the legislative body of a local agency, except as otherwise provided in this chapter."*³

That one sentence is by far the most important of the entire Brown Act. If the opening is the soul, that sentence is the heart of the Brown Act.

Broad coverage

The Brown Act covers members of virtually every type of local government body, elected or appointed, decision-making or advisory. Some types of private organizations are covered, as are newly-elected members of a legislative body, even before they take office.

Similarly, meetings subject to the Brown Act are not limited to face-to-face gatherings. They also include any communication medium or device through which a majority of a legislative body

PRACTICE TIP: The key to the Brown Act is a single sentence. In summary, all meetings shall be **open and public** except when the Brown Act authorizes otherwise.

discusses, deliberates or takes action on an item of business outside of a noticed meeting. They include meetings held from remote locations by teleconference.

New communication technologies present new Brown Act challenges. For example, common email practices of forwarding or replying to messages can easily lead to a serial meeting prohibited by the Brown Act, as can participation by members of a legislative body in an internet chatroom or blog dialogue. Communicating during meetings using electronic technology (such as laptop computers, tablets, or smart phones) may create the perception that private communications are influencing the outcome of decisions; some state legislatures have banned the practice. On the other hand, widespread cablecasting and web streaming of meetings has greatly expanded public access to the decision-making process.

Narrow exemptions

The express purpose of the Brown Act is to assure that local government agencies conduct the public's business openly and publicly. Courts and the California Attorney General usually broadly construe the Brown Act in favor of greater public access and narrowly construe exemptions to its general rules.⁴

Generally, public officials should think of themselves as living in glass houses, and that they may only draw the curtains when it is in the public interest to preserve confidentiality. Closed sessions may be held only as specifically authorized by the provisions of the Brown Act itself.

The Brown Act, however, is limited to meetings among a majority of the members of multi-member government bodies when the subject relates to local agency business. It does not apply to independent conduct of individual decision-makers. It does not apply to social, ceremonial, educational, and other gatherings as long as a majority of the members of a body do not discuss issues related to their local agency's business. Meetings of temporary advisory committees — as distinguished from standing committees — made up solely of less than a quorum of a legislative body are not subject to the Brown Act.

The law does not apply to local agency staff or employees, but they may facilitate a violation by acting as a conduit for discussion, deliberation, or action by the legislative body.⁵

The law, on the one hand, recognizes the need of individual local officials to meet and discuss matters with their constituents. On the other hand, it requires — with certain specific exceptions to protect the community and preserve individual rights — that the decision-making process be public. Sometimes the boundary between the two is not easy to draw.

Public participation in meetings

In addition to requiring the public's business to be conducted in open, noticed meetings, the Brown Act also extends to the public the right to participate in meetings. Individuals, lobbyists, and members of the news media possess the right to attend, record, broadcast, and participate in public meetings. The public's participation is further enhanced by the Brown Act's requirement that a meaningful agenda be posted in advance of meetings, by limiting discussion and action to matters listed on the agenda, and by requiring that meeting materials be made available.

Legislative bodies may, however, adopt reasonable regulations on public testimony and the conduct of public meetings, including measures to address disruptive conduct and irrelevant speech.

PRACTICE TIP: Think of the government's house as being made of glass. The curtains may be drawn only to further the public's interest. A local policy on the use of laptop computers, tablets, and smart phones during Brown Act meetings may help avoid problems.

CHAPTER 1: IT IS THE PEOPLE'S BUSINESS

Controversy

Not surprisingly, the Brown Act has been a source of confusion and controversy since its inception. News media and government watchdogs often argue the law is toothless, pointing out that there has never been a single criminal conviction for a violation. They often suspect that closed sessions are being misused.

Public officials complain that the Brown Act makes it difficult to respond to constituents and requires public discussions of items better discussed privately — such as why a particular person should not be appointed to a board or commission. Many elected officials find the Brown Act inconsistent with their private business experiences. Closed meetings can be more efficient; they eliminate grandstanding and promote candor. The techniques that serve well in business — the working lunch, the sharing of information through a series of phone calls or emails, the backroom conversations and compromises — are often not possible under the Brown Act.

As a matter of public policy, California (along with many other states) has concluded that there is more to be gained than lost by conducting public business in the open. Government behind closed doors may well be efficient and business-like, but it may be perceived as unresponsive and untrustworthy.

PRACTICE TIP: Transparency is a foundational value for ethical government practices. The Brown Act is a floor, not a ceiling, for conduct.

Beyond the law — good business practices

Violations of the Brown Act can lead to invalidation of an agency's action, payment of a challenger's attorney fees, public embarrassment, even criminal prosecution. But the Brown Act is a floor, not a ceiling for conduct of public officials. This guide is focused not only on the Brown Act as a minimum standard, but also on meeting practices or activities that, legal or not, are likely

to create controversy. Problems may crop up, for example, when agenda descriptions are too brief or vague, when an informal get-together takes on the appearance of a meeting, when an agency conducts too much of its business in closed session or discusses matters in closed session that are beyond the authorized scope, or when controversial issues arise that are not on the agenda.

The Brown Act allows a legislative body to adopt practices and requirements for greater access to meetings for itself and its subordinate committees and bodies that are more stringent than the law itself requires.⁶ Rather than simply restate the basic requirements of the Brown Act, local open meeting policies should strive to anticipate and prevent problems in areas where the Brown Act does not provide full guidance. As with the adoption of any other significant policy, public comment should be solicited.



A local policy could build on these basic Brown Act goals:

- A legislative body's need to get its business done smoothly;
- The public's right to participate meaningfully in meetings, and to review documents used in decision-making at a relevant point in time;
- A local agency's right to confidentially address certain negotiations, personnel matters, claims and litigation; and
- The right of the press to fully understand and communicate public agency decision-making.

An explicit and comprehensive public meeting and information policy, especially if reviewed periodically, can be an important element in maintaining or improving public relations. Such a policy exceeds the absolute requirements of the law — but if the law were enough, this guide would be unnecessary. A narrow legalistic approach will not avoid or resolve potential controversies. An agency should consider going beyond the law, and look at its unique circumstances and determine if there is a better way to prevent potential problems and promote public trust. At the very least, local agencies need to think about how their agendas are structured in order to make Brown Act compliance easier. They need to plan carefully to make sure public participation fits smoothly into the process.

Achieving balance

The Brown Act should be neither an excuse for hiding the ball nor a mechanism for hindering efficient and orderly meetings. The Brown Act represents a balance among the interests of constituencies whose interests do not always coincide. It calls for openness in local government, yet should allow government to function responsively and productively.

There must be both adequate notice of what discussion and action is to occur during a meeting as well as a normal degree of spontaneity in the dialogue between elected officials and their constituents.

The ability of an elected official to confer with constituents or colleagues must be balanced against the important public policy prohibiting decision-making outside of public meetings.

In the end, implementation of the Brown Act must ensure full participation of the public and preserve the integrity of the decision-making process, yet not stifle government officials and impede the effective and natural operation of government.

Historical note

In late 1951, *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Mike Harris spent six weeks looking into the way local agencies conducted meetings. State law had long required that business be done in public, but Harris discovered secret meetings or caucuses were common. He wrote a 10-part series on “Your Secret Government” that ran in May and June 1952.

Out of the series came a decision to push for a new state open meeting law. Harris and Richard (Bud) Carpenter, legal counsel for the League of California Cities, drafted such a bill and Assembly Member Ralph M. Brown agreed to carry it. The Legislature passed the bill and Governor Earl Warren signed it into law in 1953.

The Ralph M. Brown Act, known as the Brown Act, has evolved under a series of amendments and court decisions, and has been the model for other open meeting laws — such as the Bagley-Keene Act, enacted in 1967 to cover state agencies.

Assembly Member Brown is best known for the open meeting law that carries his name. He was elected to the Assembly in 1942 and served 19 years, including the last three years as Speaker. He then became an appellate court justice.

PRACTICE TIP: The Brown Act should be viewed as a tool to facilitate the business of local government agencies. Local policies that go beyond the minimum requirements of law may help instill public confidence and avoid problems.

CHAPTER 1: IT IS THE PEOPLE'S BUSINESS

ENDNOTES:

- 1 California Government Code section 54950
- 2 California Constitution, Art. 1, section 3(b)(1)
- 3 California Government Code section 54953(a)
- 4 This principle of broad construction when it furthers public access and narrow construction if a provision limits public access is also stated in the amendment to the State's Constitution adopted by Proposition 59 in 2004. California Constitution, Art. 1, section 3(b)(2).
- 5 California Government Code section 54952.2(b)(2) and (c)(1); *Wolfe v. City of Fremont* (2006) 144 Cal.App.4th 533
- 6 California Government Code section 54953.7

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CHAPTER 2: LEGISLATIVE BODIES

Chapter 2

LEGISLATIVE BODIES

The Brown Act applies to the legislative bodies of local agencies. It defines “legislative body” broadly to include just about every type of decision-making body of a local agency.¹



What is a “legislative body” of a local agency?

A “legislative body” includes:

- **The “governing body”** of a local agency” and certain of its subsidiary bodies; “or any other local body created by state or federal statute.”² This includes city councils, boards of supervisors, school boards and boards of trustees of special districts. A “local agency” is any city, county, city and county, school district, municipal corporation, successor agency to a redevelopment agency, district, political subdivision or other local public agency.³ A housing authority is a local agency under the Brown Act even though it is created by and is an agent of the state.⁴ The California Attorney General has opined that air pollution control districts and regional open space districts are also covered.⁵ Entities created pursuant to joint powers agreements are also local agencies within the meaning of the Brown Act.⁶

- **Newly-elected members** of a legislative body who have not yet assumed office must conform to the requirements of the Brown Act as if already in office.⁷ Thus, meetings between incumbents and newly-elected members of a legislative body, such as a meeting between two outgoing members and a member-elect of a five-member body, could violate the Brown Act.

PRACTICE TIP: The prudent presumption is that an advisory committee or task force is subject to the Brown Act. Even if one clearly is not, it may want to comply with the Brown Act. Public meetings may reduce the possibility of misunderstandings and controversy.

- Q.** On the morning following the election to a five-member legislative body of a local agency, two successful candidates, neither an incumbent, meet with an incumbent member of the legislative body for a celebratory breakfast. Does this violate the Brown Act?
- A.** *It might, and absolutely would if the conversation turns to agency business. Even though the candidates-elect have not officially been sworn in, the Brown Act applies. If purely a social event, there is no violation but it would be preferable if others were invited to attend to avoid the appearance of impropriety.*

- **Appointed bodies** — whether permanent or temporary, decision-making or advisory — including planning commissions, civil service commissions and other subsidiary committees, boards, and bodies. Volunteer groups, executive search committees, task forces, and blue ribbon committees created by formal action of the governing body are legislative bodies. When the members of two or more legislative bodies are appointed to serve on an entirely separate advisory group, the resulting body may be subject to the

Brown Act. In one reported case, a city council created a committee of two members of the city council and two members of the city planning commission to review qualifications of prospective planning commissioners and make recommendations to the council. The court held that their joint mission made them a legislative body subject to the Brown Act. Had the two committees remained separate; and met only to exchange information and report back to their respective boards, they would have been exempt from the Brown Act.⁸

- **Standing committees** of a legislative body, irrespective of their composition, which have either: (1) a continuing subject matter jurisdiction; or (2) a meeting schedule fixed by charter, ordinance, resolution, or formal action of a legislative body.⁹ Even if it comprises less than a quorum of the governing body, a standing committee is subject to the Brown Act. For example, if a governing body creates long-term committees on budget and finance or on public safety, those are standing committees subject to the Brown Act. Further, according to the California Attorney General, function over form controls. For example, a statement by the legislative body that the advisory committee “shall not exercise continuing subject matter jurisdiction” or the fact that the committee does not have a fixed meeting schedule is not determinative.¹⁰ “Formal action” by a legislative body includes authorization given to the agency’s executive officer to appoint an advisory committee pursuant to agency-adopted policy.¹¹
- The governing body of any **private organization** either: (1) created by the legislative body in order to exercise authority that may lawfully be delegated by such body to a private corporation, limited liability company or other entity; or (2) that receives agency funding and whose governing board includes a member of the legislative body of the local agency appointed by the legislative body as a full voting member of the private entity’s governing board.¹² These include some nonprofit corporations created by local agencies.¹³ If a local agency contracts with a private firm for a service (for example, payroll, janitorial, or food services), the private firm is not covered by the Brown Act.¹⁴ When a member of a legislative body sits on a board of a private organization as a private person and is not appointed by the legislative body, the board will not be subject to the Brown Act. Similarly, when the legislative body appoints someone other than one of its own members to such boards, the Brown Act does not apply. Nor does it apply when a private organization merely receives agency funding.¹⁵

PRACTICE TIP: It can be difficult to determine whether a subcommittee of a body falls into the category of a standing committee or an exempt temporary committee. Suppose a committee is created to explore the renewal of a franchise or a topic of similarly limited scope and duration. Is it an exempt temporary committee or a non-exempt standing committee? The answer may depend on factors such as how meeting schedules are determined, the scope of the committee’s charge, or whether the committee exists long enough to have “continuing jurisdiction.”

Q: The local chamber of commerce is funded in part by the city. The mayor sits on the chamber’s board of directors. Is the chamber board a legislative body subject to the Brown Act?

A: *Maybe. If the chamber’s governing documents require the mayor to be on the board and the city council appoints the mayor to that position, the board is a legislative body. If, however, the chamber board independently appoints the mayor to its board, or the mayor attends chamber board meetings in a purely advisory capacity, it is not.*

Q: If a community college district board creates an auxiliary organization to operate a campus bookstore or cafeteria, is the board of the organization a legislative body?

A: *Yes. But, if the district instead contracts with a private firm to operate the bookstore or cafeteria, the Brown Act would not apply to the private firm.*

- **Certain types of hospital operators.** A lessee of a hospital (or portion of a hospital)

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first leased under Health and Safety Code subsection 32121(p) after January 1, 1994, which exercises “material authority” delegated to it by a local agency, whether or not such lessee is organized and operated by the agency or by a delegated authority.¹⁶

What is not a “legislative body” for purposes of the Brown Act?

- A temporary advisory committee composed **solely of less than a quorum** of the legislative body that serves a limited or single purpose, that is not perpetual, and that will be dissolved once its specific task is completed is not subject to the Brown Act.¹⁷ Temporary committees are sometimes called *ad hoc* committees, a term not used in the Brown Act. Examples include an advisory committee composed of less than a quorum created to interview candidates for a vacant position or to meet with representatives of other entities to exchange information on a matter of concern to the agency, such as traffic congestion.¹⁸
- Groups advisory to a single decision-maker or appointed by staff are not covered. The Brown Act applies only to committees created by formal action of the legislative body and not to committees created by others. A committee advising a superintendent of schools would not be covered by the Brown Act. However, the same committee, if created by formal action of the school board, would be covered.¹⁹

Q. A member of the legislative body of a local agency informally establishes an advisory committee of five residents to advise her on issues as they arise. Does the Brown Act apply to this committee?

A. *No, because the committee has not been established by formal action of the legislative body.*

Q. During a meeting of the city council, the council directs the city manager to form an advisory committee of residents to develop recommendations for a new ordinance. The city manager forms the committee and appoints its members; the committee is instructed to direct its recommendations to the city manager. Does the Brown Act apply to this committee?

A. *Possibly, because the direction from the city council might be regarded as a formal action of the body notwithstanding that the city manager controls the committee.*

- Individual decision makers who are not elected or appointed members of a legislative body are not covered by the Brown Act. For example, a disciplinary hearing presided over by a department head or a meeting of agency department heads are not subject to the Brown Act since such assemblies are not those of a legislative body.²⁰
- Public employees, each acting individually and not engaging in collective deliberation on a specific issue, such as the drafting and review of an agreement, do not constitute a legislative body under the Brown Act, even if the drafting and review process was established by a legislative body.²¹
- County central committees of political parties are also not Brown Act bodies.²²

ENDNOTES:

1 *Taxpayers for Livable Communities v. City of Malibu* (2005) 126 Cal.App.4th 1123, 1127

- 2 California Government Code section 54952(a) and (b)
- 3 California Government Code section 54951; Health and Safety Code section 34173(g) (successor agencies to former redevelopment agencies subject to the Brown Act). But see Education Code section 35147, which exempts certain school councils and school site advisory committees from the Brown Act and imposes upon them a separate set of rules.
- 4 *Torres v. Board of Commissioners of Housing Authority of Tulare County* (1979) 89 Cal.App.3d 545, 549-550
- 5 71 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 96 (1988); 73 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 1 (1990)
- 6 *McKee v. Los Angeles Interagency Metropolitan Police Apprehension Crime Task Force* (2005) 134 Cal. App.4th 354, 362
- 7 California Government Code section 54952.1
- 8 *Joiner v. City of Sebastopol* (1981) 125 Cal.App.3d 799, 804-805
- 9 California Government Code section 54952(b)
- 10 79 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 69 (1996)
- 11 *Frazer v. Dixon Unified School District* (1993) 18 Cal.App.4th 781, 793
- 12 California Government Code section 54952(c)(1). Regarding private organizations that receive local agency funding, the same rule applies to a full voting member appointed prior to February 9, 1996 who, after that date, is made a non-voting board member by the legislative body. California Government Code section 54952(c)(2)
- 13 California Government Code section 54952(c)(1)(A); *International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union v. Los Angeles Export Terminal, Inc.* (1999) 69 Cal.App.4th 287, 300; *Epstein v. Hollywood Entertainment Dist. II Business Improvement District* (2001) 87 Cal.App.4th 862, 876; see also 85 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 55 (2002)
- 14 *International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union v. Los Angeles Export Terminal* (1999) 69 Cal. App.4th 287, 300 fn. 5
- 15 "The Brown Act, Open Meetings for Local Legislative Bodies," California Attorney General's Office (2003), p. 7
- 16 California Government Code section 54952(d)
- 17 California Government Code section 54952(b); see also *Freedom Newspapers, Inc. v. Orange County Employees Retirement System Board of Directors* (1993) 6 Cal.4th 821, 832.
- 18 *Taxpayers for Livable Communities v. City of Malibu* (2005) 126 Cal.App.4th 1123, 1129
- 19 56 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 14, 16-17 (1973)
- 20 *Wilson v. San Francisco Municipal Railway* (1973) 29 Cal.App.3d 870, 878-879
- 21 *Golightly v. Molina* (2014) 229 Cal.App.4th 1501, 1513
- 22 59 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 162, 164 (1976)

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MEETINGS



The Brown Act only applies to meetings of local legislative bodies. The Brown Act defines a meeting as: "... and any congregation of a majority of the members of a legislative body at the same time and location, including teleconference location as permitted by Section 54953, to hear, discuss, deliberate, or take any action on any item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body."¹ The term "meeting" is not limited to gatherings at which action is taken but includes deliberative gatherings as well. A hearing before an individual hearing officer is not a meeting under the Brown Act because it is not a hearing before a legislative body.²

Brown Act meetings

Brown Act meetings include a legislative body's regular meetings, special meetings, emergency meetings, and adjourned meetings.

- **"Regular meetings"** are meetings occurring at the dates, times, and location set by resolution, ordinance, or other formal action by the legislative body and are subject to 72-hour posting requirements.³
- **"Special meetings"** are meetings called by the presiding officer or majority of the legislative body to discuss only discrete items on the agenda under the Brown Act's notice requirements for special meetings and are subject to 24-hour posting requirements.⁴
- **"Emergency meetings"** are a limited class of meetings held when prompt action is needed due to actual or threatened disruption of public facilities and are held on little notice.⁵
- **"Adjourned meetings"** are regular or special meetings that have been adjourned or re-adjourned to a time and place specified in the order of adjournment, with no agenda required for regular meetings adjourned for less than five calendar days as long as no additional business is transacted.⁶

Six exceptions to the meeting definition

The Brown Act creates six exceptions to the meeting definition:⁷

Individual Contacts

The first exception involves individual contacts between a member of the legislative body and any other person. The Brown Act does not limit a legislative body member acting on his or her own. This exception recognizes the right to confer with constituents, advocates, consultants, news reporters, local agency staff, or a colleague.

Individual contacts, however, cannot be used to do in stages what would be prohibited in one step. For example, a series of individual contacts that leads to discussion, deliberation, or action among a majority of the members of a legislative body is prohibited. Such serial meetings are discussed below.

Conferences

The second exception allows a legislative body majority to attend a conference or similar gathering open to the public that addresses issues of general interest to the public or to public agencies of the type represented by the legislative body.

Among other things, this exception permits legislative body members to attend annual association conferences of city, county, school, community college, and other local agency officials, so long as those meetings are open to the public. However, a majority of members cannot discuss among themselves, other than as part of the scheduled program, business of a specific nature that is within their local agency's subject matter jurisdiction.



Community Meetings

The third exception allows a legislative body majority to attend an open and publicized meeting held by another organization to address a topic of local community concern. A majority cannot discuss among themselves, other than as part of the scheduled program, business of a specific nature that is within the legislative body's subject matter jurisdiction. Under this exception, a legislative body majority may attend a local service club meeting or a local candidates' night if the meetings are open to the public.

"I see we have four distinguished members of the city council at our meeting tonight," said the chair of the Environmental Action Coalition. "I wonder if they have anything to say about the controversy over enacting a slow growth ordinance?"

The Brown Act permits a majority of a legislative body to attend and speak at an open and publicized meeting conducted by another organization. The Brown Act may nevertheless be violated if a majority discusses, deliberates, or takes action on an item during the meeting of the other organization. There is a fine line between what is permitted and what is not; hence, members should exercise caution when participating in these types of events.

- Q.** The local chamber of commerce sponsors an open and public candidate debate during an election campaign. Three of the five agency members are up for re-election and all three participate. All of the candidates are asked their views of a controversial project scheduled for a meeting to occur just after the election. May the three incumbents answer the question?
- A.** Yes, because the Brown Act does not constrain the incumbents from expressing their views regarding important matters facing the local agency as part of the political process the same as any other candidates.

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**Other Legislative Bodies**

The fourth exception allows a majority of a legislative body to attend an open and publicized meeting of: (1) another body of the local agency; and (2) a legislative body of another local agency.⁸ Again, the majority cannot discuss among themselves, other than as part of the scheduled meeting, business of a specific nature that is within their subject matter jurisdiction. This exception allows, for example, a city council or a majority of a board of supervisors to attend a controversial meeting of the planning commission.

Nothing in the Brown Act prevents the majority of a legislative body from sitting together at such a meeting. They may choose not to, however, to preclude any possibility of improperly discussing local agency business and to avoid the appearance of a Brown Act violation. Further, aside

from the Brown Act, there may be other reasons, such as due process considerations, why the members should avoid giving public testimony or trying to influence the outcome of proceedings before a subordinate body.

- Q.** The entire legislative body intends to testify against a bill before the Senate Local Government Committee in Sacramento. Must this activity be noticed as a meeting of the body?
- A.** *No, because the members are attending and participating in an open meeting of another governmental body which the public may attend.*
- Q.** The members then proceed upstairs to the office of their local Assembly member to discuss issues of local interest. Must this session be noticed as a meeting and be open to the public?
- A.** *Yes, because the entire body may not meet behind closed doors except for proper closed sessions. The same answer applies to a private lunch or dinner with the Assembly member.*

Standing Committees

The fifth exception authorizes the attendance of a majority at an open and noticed meeting of a standing committee of the legislative body, provided that the legislative body members who are not members of the standing committee attend only as observers (meaning that they cannot speak or otherwise participate in the meeting).⁹

- Q.** The legislative body establishes a standing committee of two of its five members, which meets monthly. A third member of the legislative body wants to attend these meetings and participate. May she?
- A.** *She may attend, but only as an observer; she may not participate.*

Social or Ceremonial Events

The final exception permits a majority of a legislative body to attend a purely social or ceremonial occasion. Once again, a majority cannot discuss business among themselves of a specific nature that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body.

Nothing in the Brown Act prevents a majority of members from attending the same football game, party, wedding, funeral, reception, or farewell. The test is not whether a majority of a legislative body attends the function, but whether business of a specific nature within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body is discussed. So long as no such business is discussed, there is no violation of the Brown Act.

Grand Jury Testimony

In addition, members of a legislative body, either individually or collectively, may give testimony in private before a grand jury.¹⁰ This is the equivalent of a seventh exception to the Brown Act's definition of a "meeting."

Collective briefings

None of these exceptions permits a majority of a legislative body to meet together with staff in advance of a meeting for a collective briefing. Any such briefings that involve a majority of the body in the same place and time must be open to the public and satisfy Brown Act meeting notice and agenda requirements.

Retreats or workshops of legislative bodies

Gatherings by a majority of legislative body members at the legislative body's retreats, study sessions, or workshops are covered under the Brown Act. This is the case whether the retreat, study session, or workshop focuses on long-range agency planning, discussion of critical local issues, or team building and group dynamics.¹¹



Q. The legislative body wants to hold a team-building session to improve relations among its members. May such a session be conducted behind closed doors?

A. *No, this is not a proper subject for a closed session, and there is no other basis to exclude the public. Council relations are a matter of public business.*

Serial meetings

One of the most frequently asked questions about the Brown Act involves serial meetings. At any one time, such meetings involve only a portion of a legislative body, but eventually involve a majority. The Brown Act provides that "[a] majority of the members of a legislative body shall not, outside a meeting ... use a series of communications of any kind, directly or through intermediaries, to discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item of business that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body."¹² The problem with serial meetings is the process, which deprives the public of an opportunity for meaningful observation of and participation in legislative body decision-making.

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The serial meeting may occur by either a “daisy chain” or a “hub and spoke” sequence. In the daisy chain scenario, Member A contacts Member B, Member B contacts Member C, Member C contacts Member D and so on, until a quorum has discussed, deliberated, or taken action on an item within the legislative body’s subject matter jurisdiction. The hub and spoke process involves at least two scenarios. In the first scenario, Member A (the hub) sequentially contacts Members B, C, and D and so on (the spokes), until a quorum has been contacted. In the second scenario, a staff member (the hub), functioning as an intermediary for the legislative body or one of its members,



communicates with a majority of members (the spokes) one-by-one for for discussion, deliberation, or a decision on a proposed action.¹³ Another example of a serial meeting is when a chief executive officer (the hub) briefs a majority of members (the spokes) prior to a formal meeting and, in the process, information about the members’ respective views is revealed. Each of these scenarios violates the Brown Act.

A legislative body member has the right, if not the duty, to meet with constituents to address their concerns. That member also has the right to confer with a colleague (but not with a majority of the body, counting the member) or appropriate staff about local agency business. An employee or official of a local agency may engage in separate conversations or communications outside of an open and noticed meeting “with members of a legislative body in order to answer questions or provide information regarding a matter that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of

the local agency if that person does not communicate to members of the legislative body the comments or position of any other member or members of the legislative body.”¹⁴

The Brown Act has been violated, however, if several one-on-one meetings or conferences leads to a discussion, deliberation, or action by a majority. In one case, a violation occurred when a quorum of a city council, by a letter that had been circulated among members outside of a formal meeting, directed staff to take action in an eminent domain proceeding.¹⁵

A unilateral written communication to the legislative body, such as an informational or advisory memorandum, does not violate the Brown Act.¹⁶ Such a memo, however, may be a public record.¹⁷

The phone call was from a lobbyist. “Say, I need your vote for that project in the south area. How about it?”

“Well, I don’t know,” replied Board Member Aletto. “That’s kind of a sticky proposition. You sure you need my vote?”

“Well, I’ve got Bradley and Cohen lined up and another vote leaning. With you I’d be over the top.”

Moments later, the phone rings again. “Hey, I’ve been hearing some rumbles on that south area project,” said the newspaper reporter. “I’m counting noses. How are you voting on it?”

Neither the lobbyist nor the reporter has violated the Brown Act, but they are facilitating

a violation. The board member may have violated the Brown Act by hearing about the positions of other board members and indeed coaxing the lobbyist to reveal the other board members' positions by asking "You sure you need my vote?" The prudent course is to avoid such leading conversations and to caution lobbyists, staff, and news media against revealing such positions of others.

The mayor sat down across from the city manager. "From now on," he declared, "I want you to provide individual briefings on upcoming agenda items. Some of this material is very technical, and the council members don't want to sound like idiots asking about it in public. Besides that, briefings will speed up the meeting."

Agency employees or officials may have separate conversations or communications outside of an open and noticed meeting "with members of a legislative body in order to answer questions or provide information regarding a matter that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the local agency if that person does not communicate to members of the legislative body the comments or position of any other member or members of the legislative body."¹⁸ Members should always be vigilant when discussing local agency business with anyone to avoid conversations that could lead to a discussion, deliberation or action taken among the majority of the legislative body.

"Thanks for the information," said Council Member Kim. "These zoning changes can be tricky, and now I think I'm better equipped to make the right decision."

"Glad to be of assistance," replied the planning director. "I'm sure Council Member Jones is OK with these changes. How are you leaning?"

"Well," said Council Member Kim, "I'm leaning toward approval. I know that two of my colleagues definitely favor approval."

The planning director should not disclose Jones' prospective vote, and Kim should not disclose the prospective votes of two of her colleagues. Under these facts, there likely has been a serial meeting in violation of the Brown Act.

PRACTICE TIP: When briefing legislative body members, staff must exercise care not to disclose other members' views and positions.

- Q.** The agency's website includes a chat room where agency employees and officials participate anonymously and often discuss issues of local agency business. Members of the legislative body participate regularly. Does this scenario present a potential for violation of the Brown Act?
- A.** Yes, because it is a technological device that may serve to allow for a majority of members to discuss, deliberate, or take action on matters of agency business.
- Q.** A member of a legislative body contacts two other members on a five-member body relative to scheduling a special meeting. Is this an illegal serial meeting?
- A.** No, the Brown Act expressly allows a majority of a body to call a special meeting, though the members should avoid discussing the merits of what is to be taken up at the meeting.

CHAPTER 3: MEETINGS

Particular care should be exercised when staff briefings of legislative body members occur by email because of the ease of using the “reply to all” button that may inadvertently result in a Brown Act violation.

Informal gatherings

Often members are tempted to mix business with pleasure — for example, by holding a post-meeting gathering. Informal gatherings at which local agency business is discussed or transacted violate the law if they are not conducted in conformance with the Brown Act.¹⁹ A luncheon gathering in a crowded dining room violates the Brown Act if the public does not have an opportunity to attend, hear, or participate in the deliberations of members.

Thursday at 11:30 a.m., as they did every week, the board of directors of the Dry Gulch Irrigation District trooped into Pop’s Donut Shoppe for an hour of talk and fellowship. They sat at the corner window, fronting on Main and Broadway, to show they had nothing to hide. Whenever he could, the managing editor of the weekly newspaper down the street hurried over to join the board.

A gathering like this would not violate the Brown Act if board members scrupulously avoided talking about irrigation district issues — which might be difficult. This kind of situation should be avoided. The public is unlikely to believe the board members could meet regularly without discussing public business. A newspaper executive’s presence in no way lessens the potential for a violation of the Brown Act.

- Q.** The agency has won a major victory in the Supreme Court on an issue of importance. The presiding officer decides to hold an impromptu press conference in order to make a statement to the print and broadcast media. All the other members show up in order to make statements of their own and be seen by the media. Is this gathering illegal?
- A.** *Technically there is no exception for this sort of gathering, but as long as members do not state their intentions as to future action to be taken and the press conference is open to the public, it seems harmless.*



Technological conferencing

Except for certain nonsubstantive purposes, such as scheduling a special meeting, a conference call including a majority of the members of a legislative body is an unlawful meeting. But, in an effort to keep up with information age technologies, the Brown Act specifically allows a legislative body to use any type of teleconferencing to meet, receive public comment and testimony, deliberate, or conduct a closed session.²⁰ While the Brown Act contains specific requirements for conducting a teleconference, the decision to use teleconferencing is entirely discretionary with the body. No person has a right under the Brown Act to have a meeting by teleconference.

“Teleconference” is defined as “a meeting of a legislative body, the members of which are in different locations, connected by electronic means, through either

audio or video, or both.”²¹ In addition to the specific requirements relating to teleconferencing, the meeting must comply with all provisions of the Brown Act otherwise applicable. The Brown Act contains the following teleconferencing requirements:²²

- Teleconferencing may be used for all purposes during any meeting;
- At least a quorum of the legislative body must participate from locations within the local agency’s jurisdiction;
- Additional teleconference locations may be made available for the public;
- Each teleconference location must be specifically identified in the notice and agenda of the meeting, including a full address and room number, as may be applicable;
- Agendas must be posted at each teleconference location, even if a hotel room or a residence;
- Each teleconference location, including a hotel room or residence, must be accessible to the public and have technology, such as a speakerphone, to enable the public to participate;
- The agenda must provide the opportunity for the public to address the legislative body directly at each teleconference location; and
- All votes must be by roll call.

Q. A member on vacation wants to participate in a meeting of the legislative body and vote by cellular phone from her car while driving from Washington, D.C. to New York. May she?

A. *She may not participate or vote because she is not in a noticed and posted teleconference location.*

The use of teleconferencing to conduct a legislative body meeting presents a variety of issues beyond the scope of this guide to discuss in detail. Therefore, before teleconferencing a meeting, legal counsel for the local agency should be consulted.

Location of meetings

The Brown Act generally requires all regular and special meetings of a legislative body, including retreats and workshops, to be held within the boundaries of the territory over which the local agency exercises jurisdiction.²³

An open and publicized meeting of a legislative body may be held outside of agency boundaries if the purpose of the meeting is one of the following:²⁴

- Comply with state or federal law or a court order, or attend a judicial conference or administrative proceeding in which the local agency is a party;
- Inspect real or personal property that cannot be conveniently brought into the local agency’s territory, provided the meeting is limited to items relating to that real or personal property;

Q. The agency is considering approving a major retail mall. The developer has built other similar malls, and invites the entire legislative body to visit a mall outside the jurisdiction. May the entire body go?

A. *Yes, the Brown Act permits meetings outside the boundaries of the agency for specified reasons and inspection of property is one such reason. The field trip must be treated as a meeting and the public must be allowed to attend.*

CHAPTER 3: MEETINGS

- Participate in multiagency meetings or discussions; however, such meetings must be held within the boundaries of one of the participating agencies, and all of those agencies must give proper notice;
- Meet in the closest meeting facility if the local agency has no meeting facility within its boundaries, or meet at its principal office if that office is located outside the territory over which the agency has jurisdiction;
- Meet with elected or appointed federal or California officials when a local meeting would be impractical, solely to discuss a legislative or regulatory issue affecting the local agency and over which the federal or state officials have jurisdiction;
- Meet in or nearby a facility owned by the agency, provided that the topic of the meeting is limited to items directly related to the facility; or
- Visit the office of its legal counsel for a closed session on pending litigation, when to do so would reduce legal fees or costs.²⁵

In addition, the governing board of a school or community college district may hold meetings outside of its boundaries to attend a conference on nonadversarial collective bargaining techniques, interview candidates for school district superintendent, or interview a potential

employee from another district.²⁶ A school board may also interview members of the public residing in another district if the board is considering employing that district's superintendent.

Similarly, meetings of a joint powers authority can occur within the territory of at least one of its member agencies, and a joint powers authority with members throughout the state may meet anywhere in the state.²⁷

Finally, if a fire, flood, earthquake, or other emergency makes the usual meeting place unsafe, the presiding officer can designate another meeting place for the duration of the emergency. News media that have requested notice of meetings must be notified of the designation by the most rapid means of communication available.²⁸

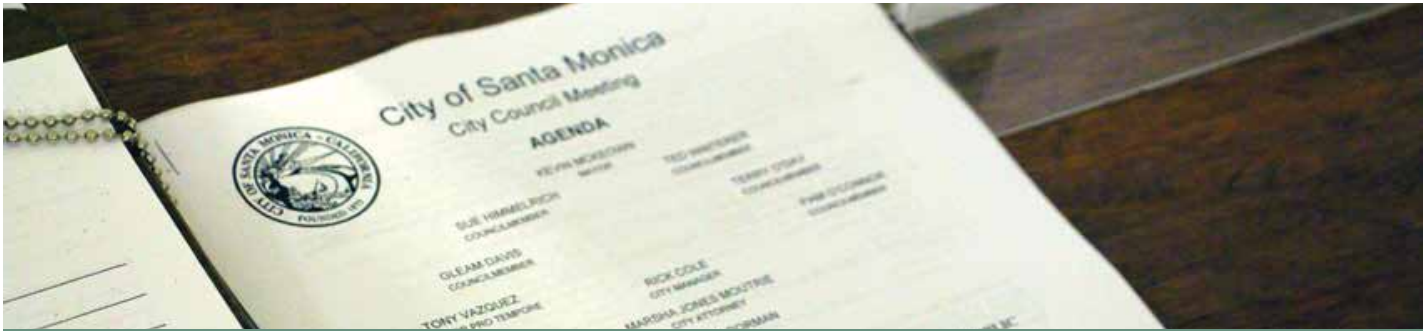


Endnotes:

- 1 California Government Code section 54952.2(a)
- 2 *Wilson v. San Francisco Municipal Railway* (1973) 29 Cal.App.3d 870
- 3 California Government Code section 54954(a)
- 4 California Government Code section 54956
- 5 California Government Code section 54956.5
- 6 California Government Code section 54955
- 7 California Government Code section 54952.2(c)
- 8 California Government Code section 54952.2(c)(4)
- 9 California Government Code section 54952.2(c)(6)
- 10 California Government Code section 54953.1
- 11 “*The Brown Act*,” California Attorney General (2003), p. 10
- 12 California Government Code section 54952.2(b)(1)
- 13 *Stockton Newspaper Inc. v. Redevelopment Agency* (1985) 171 Cal.App.3d 95
- 14 California Government Code section 54952.2(b)(2)
- 15 *Common Cause v. Stirling* (1983) 147 Cal.App.3d 518
- 16 *Roberts v. City of Palmdale* (1993) 5 Cal.4th 363
- 17 California Government Code section 54957.5(a)
- 18 California Government Code section 54952.2(b)(2)
- 19 California Government Code section 54952.2; 43 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 36 (1964)
- 20 California Government Code section 54953(b)(1)
- 21 California Government Code section 54953(b)(4)
- 22 California Government Code section 54953
- 23 California Government Code section 54954(b)
- 24 California Government Code section 54954(b)(1)-(7)
- 25 94 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 15 (2011)
- 26 California Government Code section 54954(c)
- 27 California Government Code section 54954(d)
- 28 California Government Code section 54954(e)

Updates to this publication responding to changes in the Brown Act or new court interpretations are available at www.cacities.org/opengovernment. A current version of the Brown Act may be found at www.leginfo.ca.gov.





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CHAPTER 4: AGENDAS, NOTICES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Chapter 4

AGENDAS, NOTICES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Effective notice is essential for an open and public meeting. Whether a meeting is open or how the public may participate in that meeting is academic if nobody knows about the meeting.

Agendas for regular meetings

Every regular meeting of a legislative body of a local agency — including advisory committees, commissions, or boards, as well as standing committees of legislative bodies — must be preceded by a posted agenda that advises the public of the meeting and the matters to be transacted or discussed.

The agenda must be posted at least 72 hours before the regular meeting in a location “freely accessible to members of the public.”¹ The courts have not definitively interpreted the “freely accessible” requirement. The California Attorney General has interpreted this

provision to require posting in a location accessible to the public 24 hours a day during the 72-hour period, but any of the 72 hours may fall on a weekend.² This provision may be satisfied by posting on a touch screen electronic kiosk accessible without charge to the public 24 hours a day during the 72-hour period.³ While posting an agenda on an agency’s Internet website will not, by itself, satisfy the “freely accessible” requirement since there is no universal access to the internet, an agency has a supplemental obligation to post the agenda on its website if: (1) the local agency has a website; and (2) the legislative body whose meeting is the subject of the agenda is either (a) a governing body, or (b) has members that are compensated, with one or more members that are also members of a governing body.⁴

Q. May the meeting of a governing body go forward if its agenda was either inadvertently not posted on the city’s website or if the website was not operational during part or all of the 72-hour period preceding the meeting?

A. *At a minimum, the Brown Act calls for “substantial compliance” with all agenda posting requirements, including posting to the agency website.⁵ Should website technical difficulties arise, seek a legal opinion from your agency attorney. The California Attorney General has opined that technical difficulties which cause the website agenda to become inaccessible for a portion of the 72 hours preceding a meeting do not automatically or inevitably lead to a Brown Act violation, provided the agency can demonstrate substantial compliance.⁶ This inquiry requires a fact-specific examination of whether the agency or its legislative body made “reasonably effective efforts to notify interested persons of a public meeting” through online posting and other available means.⁷ The Attorney General’s opinion suggests that this examination would include an evaluation of how long a technical problem persisted, the efforts made to correct the problem or otherwise ensure that the public was informed, and the actual effect the problem had on public*

awareness, among other factors.⁸ The City Attorneys' Department has taken the position that obvious website technical difficulties do not require cancellation of a meeting, provided that the agency meets all other Brown Act posting requirements and the agenda is available on the website once the technical difficulties are resolved.

The agenda must state the meeting time and place and must contain "a brief general description of each item of business to be transacted or discussed at the meeting, including items to be discussed in closed session."⁹ Special care should be taken to describe on the agenda each distinct action to be taken by the legislative body, and avoid overbroad descriptions of a "project" if the "project" is actually a set of distinct actions that must each be separately listed on the agenda.¹⁰

PRACTICE TIP: Putting together a meeting agenda requires careful thought.

Q. The agenda for a regular meeting contains the following items of business:

- Consideration of a report regarding traffic on Eighth Street; and
- Consideration of contract with ABC Consulting.

Are these descriptions adequate?

A. *If the first is, it is barely adequate. A better description would provide the reader with some idea of what the report is about and what is being recommended. The second is not adequate. A better description might read "consideration of a contract with ABC Consulting in the amount of \$50,000 for traffic engineering services regarding traffic on Eighth Street."*

Q. The agenda includes an item entitled City Manager's Report, during which time the city manager provides a brief report on notable topics of interest, none of which are listed on the agenda.

Is this permissible?

A. *Yes, so long as it does not result in extended discussion or action by the body.*

A brief general description may not be sufficient for closed session agenda items. The Brown Act provides safe harbor language for the various types of permissible closed sessions. Substantial compliance with the safe harbor language is recommended to protect legislative bodies and elected officials from legal challenges.

Mailed agenda upon written request

The legislative body, or its designee, must mail a copy of the agenda or, if requested, the entire agenda packet, to any person who has filed a written request for such materials. These copies shall be mailed at the time the agenda is posted. If requested, these materials must be made available in appropriate alternative formats to persons with disabilities.

A request for notice is valid for one calendar year and renewal requests must be filed following January 1 of each year. The legislative body may establish a fee to recover the cost of providing the service. Failure of the requesting person to receive the agenda does not constitute grounds for invalidation of actions taken at the meeting.¹¹



CHAPTER 4: AGENDAS, NOTICES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Notice requirements for special meetings

There is no express agenda requirement for special meetings, but the notice of the special meeting effectively serves as the agenda and limits the business that may be transacted or discussed.

Written notice must be sent to each member of the legislative body (unless waived in writing by that member) and to each local newspaper of general circulation, and radio or television station that has requested such notice in writing. This notice must be delivered by personal delivery or any other means that ensures receipt, at least 24 hours before the time of the meeting.



The notice must state the time and place of the meeting, as well as all business to be transacted or discussed. It is recommended that the business to be transacted or discussed be described in the same manner that an item for a regular meeting would be described on the agenda — with a brief general description. As noted above, closed session items should be described in accordance with the Brown Act's safe harbor provisions to protect legislative bodies and elected officials from challenges of noncompliance with notice requirements.

The special meeting notice must also be posted at least 24 hours prior to the special meeting using the same methods as posting an agenda for a regular meeting: (1) at a site that is freely accessible to the public, and (2) on the agency's website if: (1) the local agency has a website; and (2) the legislative body whose meeting is the subject of the agenda is either (a) a governing body, or (b) has members that are compensated, with one or more members that are also members of a governing body.¹²

Notices and agendas for adjourned and continued meetings and hearings

A regular or special meeting can be adjourned and re-adjourned to a time and place specified in the order of adjournment.¹³ If no time is stated, the meeting is continued to the hour for regular meetings. Whoever is present (even if they are less than a quorum) may so adjourn a meeting; if no member of the legislative body is present, the clerk or secretary may adjourn the meeting. If a meeting is adjourned for less than five calendar days, no new agenda need be posted so long as a new item of business is not introduced.¹⁴ A copy of the order of adjournment must be posted within 24 hours after the adjournment, at or near the door of the place where the meeting was held.

A hearing can be continued to a subsequent meeting. The process is the same as for continuing adjourned meetings, except that if the hearing is continued to a time less than 24 hours away, a copy of the order or notice of continuance must be posted immediately following the meeting.¹⁵

Notice requirements for emergency meetings

The special meeting notice provisions apply to emergency meetings, except for the 24-hour notice.¹⁶ News media that have requested written notice of special meetings must be notified by telephone at least one hour in advance of an emergency meeting, and all telephone numbers provided in that written request must be tried. If telephones are not working, the notice requirements are deemed waived. However, the news media must be notified as soon as possible of the meeting and any action taken.

News media may make a practice of having written requests on file for notification of special or emergency meetings. Absent such a request, a local agency has no legal obligation to notify news media of special or emergency meetings — although notification may be advisable in any event to avoid controversy.

Notice of compensation for simultaneous or serial meetings

A legislative body that has convened a meeting and whose membership constitutes a quorum of another legislative body, may convene a simultaneous or serial meeting of the other legislative body only after a clerk or member of the convened legislative body orally announces: (1) the amount of compensation or stipend, if any, that each member will be entitled to receive as a result of convening the meeting of the other legislative body; and (2) that the compensation or stipend is provided as a result of convening the meeting of that body.¹⁷

No oral disclosure of the amount of the compensation is required if the entire amount of such compensation is prescribed by statute and no additional compensation has been authorized by the local agency. Further, no disclosure is required with respect to reimbursements for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of the member's official duties, such as for travel, meals, and lodging.

Educational agency meetings

The Education Code contains some special agenda and special meeting provisions.¹⁸ However, they are generally consistent with the Brown Act. An item is probably void if not posted.¹⁹ A school district board must also adopt regulations to make sure the public can place matters affecting the district's business on meeting agendas and to address the board on those items.²⁰

Notice requirements for tax or assessment meetings and hearings

The Brown Act prescribes specific procedures for adoption by a city, county, special district, or joint powers authority of any new or increased tax or assessment imposed on businesses.²¹ Though written broadly, these Brown Act provisions do not apply to new or increased real property taxes or assessments as those are governed by the California Constitution, Article XIII C or XIII D, enacted by Proposition 218. At least one public meeting must be held to allow public testimony on the tax or assessment. In addition, there must also be at least 45 days notice of a public hearing at which the legislative body proposes to enact or increase the tax or assessment. Notice of the public meeting and public hearing must be provided at the same time and in the same document. The public notice relating to general taxes must be provided by newspaper publication. The public notice relating to new or increased business assessments must be provided through a mailing to all business owners proposed to be subject to the new or increased assessment. The agency may recover the reasonable costs of the public meetings, hearings, and notice.

The Brown Act exempts certain fees, standby or availability charges, recurring assessments, and new or increased assessments that are subject to the notice and hearing requirements of the Constitution.²² As a practical matter, the Constitution's notice requirements have preempted this section of the Brown Act.



CHAPTER 4: AGENDAS, NOTICES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Non-agenda items

The Brown Act generally prohibits any action or discussion of items not on the posted agenda. However, there are three specific situations in which a legislative body can act on an item not on the agenda:²³

- When a majority decides there is an “emergency situation” (as defined for emergency meetings);
- When two-thirds of the members present (or all members if less than two-thirds are present) determine there is a need for immediate action and the need to take action “came to the attention of the local agency subsequent to the agenda being posted.” This exception requires a degree of urgency. Further, an item cannot be considered under this provision if the legislative body or the staff knew about the need to take immediate action before the agenda was posted. A new need does not arise because staff forgot to put an item on the agenda or because an applicant missed a deadline; or
- When an item appeared on the agenda of, and was continued from, a meeting held not more than five days earlier.

The exceptions are narrow, as indicated by this list. The first two require a specific determination by the legislative body. That determination can be challenged in court and, if unsubstantiated, can lead to invalidation of an action.

“I’d like a two-thirds vote of the board, so we can go ahead and authorize commencement of phase two of the East Area Project,” said Chair Lopez.

“It’s not on the agenda. But we learned two days ago that we finished phase one ahead of schedule — believe it or not — and I’d like to keep it that way. Do I hear a motion?”

The desire to stay ahead of schedule generally would not satisfy “a need for immediate action.” Too casual an action could invite a court challenge by a disgruntled resident. The prudent course is to place an item on the agenda for the next meeting and not risk invalidation.

“We learned this morning of an opportunity for a state grant,” said the chief engineer at the regular board meeting, “but our application has to be submitted in two days. We’d like the board to give us the go ahead tonight, even though it’s not on the agenda.”

A legitimate immediate need can be acted upon even though not on the posted agenda by following a two-step process:

- First, make two determinations: 1) that there is an immediate need to take action, and 2) that the need arose after the posting of the agenda. The matter is then placed on the agenda.
- Second, discuss and act on the added agenda item.

Responding to the public

The public can talk about anything within the jurisdiction of the legislative body, but the legislative body generally cannot act on or discuss an item not on the agenda. What happens when a member of the public raises a subject not on the agenda?

PRACTICE TIP: Subject to very limited exceptions, the Brown Act prohibits any action or discussion of an item not on the posted agenda.

While the Brown Act does not allow discussion or action on items not on the agenda, it does allow members of the legislative body, or its staff, to “briefly respond” to comments or questions from members of the public, provide a reference to staff or other resources for factual information, or direct staff to place the issue on a future agenda. In addition, even without a comment from the public, a legislative body member or a staff member may ask for information, request a report back, request to place a matter on the agenda for a subsequent meeting (subject to the body’s rules or procedures), ask a question for clarification, make a brief announcement, or briefly report on his or her own activities.²⁴ However, caution should be used to avoid any discussion or action on such items.



Council Member Jefferson: I would like staff to respond to Resident Joe’s complaints during public comment about the repaving project on Elm Street — are there problems with this project?

City Manager Frank: The public works director has prepared a 45-minute power point presentation for you on the status of this project and will give it right now.

Council Member Brown: Take all the time you need; we need to get to the bottom of this. Our residents are unhappy.

It is clear from this dialogue that the Elm Street project was not on the council’s agenda, but was raised during the public comment period for items not on the agenda. Council Member A properly asked staff to respond; the city manager should have given at most a brief response. If a lengthy report from the public works director was warranted, the city manager should have stated that it would be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. Otherwise, both the long report and the likely discussion afterward will improperly embroil the council in a matter that is not listed on the agenda.

The right to attend and observe meetings

A number of Brown Act provisions protect the public’s right to attend, observe, and participate in meetings.

Members of the public cannot be required to register their names, provide other information, complete a questionnaire, or otherwise “fulfill any condition precedent” to attending a meeting. Any attendance list, questionnaire, or similar document posted at or near the entrance to the meeting room or circulated at a meeting must clearly state that its completion is voluntary and that all persons may attend whether or not they fill it out.²⁵

No meeting can be held in a facility that prohibits attendance based on race, religion, color, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, sex, sexual orientation, or disability, or that is inaccessible to the disabled. Nor can a meeting be held where the public must make a payment or purchase in order to be present.²⁶ This does not mean, however, that the public is entitled to free entry to a conference attended by a majority of the legislative body.²⁷

While a legislative body may use teleconferencing in connection with a meeting, the public must be given notice of and access to the teleconference location. Members of the public must be able to address the legislative body from the teleconference location.²⁸

CHAPTER 4: AGENDAS, NOTICES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Action by secret ballot, whether preliminary or final, is flatly prohibited.²⁹

All actions taken by the legislative body in open session, and the vote of each member thereon, must be disclosed to the public at the time the action is taken.³⁰

Q: The agenda calls for election of the legislative body's officers. Members of the legislative body want to cast unsigned written ballots that would be tallied by the clerk, who would announce the results. Is this voting process permissible?

A: *No. The possibility that a public vote might cause hurt feelings among members of the legislative body or might be awkward — or even counterproductive — does not justify a secret ballot.*

The legislative body may remove persons from a meeting who willfully interrupt proceedings.³¹ Ejection is justified only when audience members actually disrupt the proceedings.³² If order cannot be restored after ejecting disruptive persons, the meeting room may be cleared. Members of the news media who have not participated in the disturbance must be allowed to continue to attend the meeting. The legislative body may establish a procedure to re-admit an individual or individuals not responsible for the disturbance.³³

Records and recordings

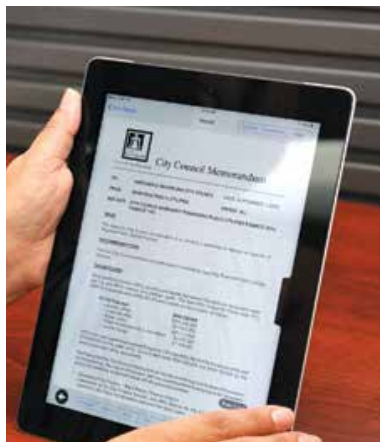
The public has the right to review agendas and other writings distributed by any person to a majority of the legislative body in connection with a matter subject to discussion or consideration at a meeting. Except for privileged documents, those materials are public records and must be made available upon request without delay.³⁴ A fee or deposit as permitted by the California Public Records Act may be charged for a copy of a public record.³⁵

Q: In connection with an upcoming hearing on a discretionary use permit, counsel for the legislative body transmits a memorandum to all members of the body outlining the litigation risks in granting or denying the permit. Must this memorandum be included in the packet of agenda materials available to the public?

A: *No. The memorandum is a privileged attorney-client communication.*

Q: In connection with an agenda item calling for the legislative body to approve a contract, staff submits to all members of the body a financial analysis explaining why the terms of the contract favor the local agency. Must this memorandum be included in the packet of agenda materials available to the public?

A: *Yes. The memorandum has been distributed to the majority of the legislative body, relates to the subject matter of a meeting, and is not a privileged communication.*



A legislative body may discuss or act on some matters without considering written materials. But if writings are distributed to a majority of a legislative body in connection with an agenda item, they must also be available to the public. A non-exempt or otherwise privileged writing distributed to a majority of the legislative body less than 72 hours before the meeting must be made available for inspection at the time of distribution at a public office or location designated for that purpose; and the agendas for all meetings of the legislative body must include the address of this office or location.³⁶ A writing distributed during a meeting must be made public:

- At the meeting if prepared by the local agency or a member of its legislative body; or
- After the meeting if prepared by some other person.³⁷

Any tape or film record of an open and public meeting made for whatever purpose by or at the direction of the local agency is subject to the California Public Records Act; however, it may be erased or destroyed 30 days after the taping or recording. Any inspection of a video or tape recording is to be provided without charge on a video or tape player made available by the local agency.³⁸ The agency may impose its ordinary charge for copies that is consistent with the California Public Records Act.³⁹



In addition, the public is specifically allowed to use audio or video tape recorders or still or motion picture cameras at a meeting to record the proceedings, absent a reasonable finding by the legislative body that noise, illumination, or obstruction of view caused by recorders or cameras would persistently disrupt the proceedings.⁴⁰

Similarly, a legislative body cannot prohibit or restrict the public broadcast of its open and public meetings without making a reasonable finding that the noise, illumination, or obstruction of view would persistently disrupt the proceedings.⁴¹

The public's place on the agenda

Every agenda for a regular meeting must allow members of the public to speak on any item of interest, so long as the item is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body. Further, the public must be allowed to speak on a specific item of business before or during the legislative body's consideration of it.⁴²

Q. Must the legislative body allow members of the public to show videos or make a power point presentation during the public comment part of the agenda, as long as the subject matter is relevant to the agency and is within the established time limit?

A. *Probably, although the agency is under no obligation to provide equipment.*

PRACTICE TIP: Public speakers cannot be compelled to give their name or address as a condition of speaking. The clerk or presiding officer may request speakers to complete a speaker card or identify themselves for the record, but must respect a speaker's desire for anonymity.

Moreover, the legislative body cannot prohibit public criticism of policies, procedures, programs, or services of the agency or the acts or omissions of the legislative body itself. But the Brown Act provides no immunity for defamatory statements.⁴³

CHAPTER 4: AGENDAS, NOTICES, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Q. May the presiding officer prohibit a member of the audience from publicly criticizing an agency employee by name during public comments?

A. *No, as long as the criticism pertains to job performance.*

Q. During the public comment period of a regular meeting of the legislative body, a resident urges the public to support and vote for a candidate vying for election to the body. May the presiding officer gavel the speaker out of order for engaging in political campaign speech?

A. *There is no case law on this subject. Some would argue that campaign issues are outside the subject matter jurisdiction of the body within the meaning of Section 54954.3(a). Others take the view that the speech must be allowed under paragraph (c) of that section because it is relevant to the governing of the agency and an implicit criticism of the incumbents.*



The legislative body may adopt reasonable regulations, including time limits, on public comments. Such regulations should be enforced fairly and without regard to speakers' viewpoints. The legislative body has discretion to modify its regulations regarding time limits on public comment if necessary. For example, the time limit could be shortened to accommodate a lengthy agenda or lengthened to allow additional time for discussion on a complicated matter.⁴⁴

The public does not need to be given an opportunity to speak on an item that has already been considered by a committee made up exclusively of members of the legislative body at a public meeting, if all interested members of the public had the opportunity to speak on the item before or during its consideration, and if the item has not been substantially changed.⁴⁵

Notices and agendas for special meetings must also give members of the public the opportunity to speak before or during consideration of an item on the agenda but need not allow members of the public an opportunity to speak on other matters within the jurisdiction of the legislative body.⁴⁶

Endnotes:

- 1 California Government Code section 54954.2(a)(1)
- 2 78 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 327 (1995)
- 3 88 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 218 (2005)
- 4 California Government Code sections 54954.2(a)(1) and 54954.2(d)
- 5 California Government Code section 54960.1(d)(1)
- 6 ___ Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. ___, No. 14-1204 (January 19, 2016) 16 Cal. Daily Op. Serv. 937 (Cal.A.G.), 2016 WL 375262
- 7 *North Pacifica LLC v. California Coastal Commission* (2008) 166 Cal.App.4th 1416, 1432
- 8 ___ Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. ___, No. 14-1204 (January 19, 2016) 16 Cal. Daily Op. Serv. 937 (Cal.A.G.), 2016 WL 375262, Slip Op. at p. 8
- 9 California Government Code section 54954.2(a)(1)
- 10 *San Joaquin Raptor Rescue v. County of Merced* (2013) 216 Cal.App.4th 1167 (legislative body's approval of CEQA action (mitigated negative declaration) without specifically listing it on the agenda violates Brown Act, even if the agenda generally describes the development project that is the subject of the CEQA analysis.)

- 11 California Government Code section 54954.1
- 12 California Government Code sections 54956(a) and (c)
- 13 California Government Code section 54955
- 14 California Government Code section 54954.2(b)(3)
- 15 California Government Code section 54955.1
- 16 California Government Code section 54956.5
- 17 California Government Code section 54952.3
- 18 Education Code sections 35144, 35145 and 72129
- 19 *Carlson v. Paradise Unified School District* (1971) 18 Cal.App.3d 196
- 20 California Education Code section 35145.5
- 21 California Government Code section 54954.6
- 22 See Cal.Const.Art.XIIIC, XIIID and California Government Code section 54954.6(h)
- 23 California Government Code section 54954.2(b)
- 24 California Government Code section 54954.2(a)(2)
- 25 California Government Code section 54953.3
- 26 California Government Code section 54961(a); California Government Code section 11135(a)
- 27 California Government Code section 54952.2(c)(2)
- 28 California Government Code section 54953(b)
- 29 California Government Code section 54953(c)
- 30 California Government Code section 54953(c)(2)
- 31 California Government Code section 54957.9.
- 32 *Norse v. City of Santa Cruz* (9th Cir. 2010) 629 F.3d 966 (silent and momentary Nazi salute directed towards mayor is not a disruption); *Acosta v. City of Costa Mesa* (9th Cir. 2013) 718 F.3d 800 (city council may not prohibit “insolent” remarks by members of the public absent actual disruption).
- 33 California Government Code section 54957.9
- 34 California Government Code section 54957.5
- 35 California Government Code section 54957.5(d)
- 36 California Government Code section 54957.5(b)
- 37 California Government Code section 54957.5(c)
- 38 California Government Code section 54953.5(b)
- 39 California Government Code section 54957.5(d)
- 40 California Government Code section 54953.5(a)
- 41 California Government Code section 54953.6
- 42 California Government Code section 54954.3(a)
- 43 California Government Code section 54954.3(c)
- 44 California Government Code section 54954.3(b); *Chaffee v. San Francisco Public Library Com.* (2005) 134 Cal.App.4th 109; 75 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 89 (1992)
- 45 California Government Code section 54954.3(a)
- 46 California Government Code section 54954.3(a)

Updates to this publication responding to changes in the Brown Act or new court interpretations are available at www.cacities.org/opengovernment. A current version of the Brown Act may be found at www.leginfo.ca.gov.





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CHAPTER 5: CLOSED SESSIONS

Chapter 5

CLOSED SESSIONS

A closed session is a meeting of a legislative body conducted in private without the attendance of the public or press. A legislative body is authorized to meet in closed session only to the extent expressly authorized by the Brown Act.¹



As summarized in Chapter 1 of this Guide, it is clear that the Brown Act must be interpreted liberally in favor of open meetings, and exceptions that limit public access (including the exceptions for closed session meetings) must be narrowly construed.² The most common purposes of the closed session provisions in the Brown Act are to avoid revealing confidential information (e.g., prejudicing the city's position in litigation or compromising the privacy interests of employees). Closed sessions should be conducted keeping those narrow purposes in mind. It is not enough that a subject is sensitive, embarrassing, or controversial. Without specific authority in the Brown Act for a closed session, a matter to be considered by a legislative body must be discussed in public. As an example, a board of police commissioners cannot meet in closed session to provide general policy guidance to a police chief, even though some matters are sensitive and the commission considers their disclosure contrary to the public interest.³

PRACTICE TIP: Some problems over closed sessions arise because secrecy itself breeds distrust. The Brown Act does not require closed sessions and legislative bodies may do well to resist the tendency to call a closed session simply because it may be permitted. A better practice is to go into closed session only when necessary.

In this chapter, the grounds for convening a closed session are called “exceptions” because they are exceptions to the general rule that meetings must be conducted openly. In some circumstances, none of the closed session exceptions apply to an issue or information the legislative body wishes to discuss privately. In these cases, it is not proper to convene a closed session, even to protect confidential information. For example, although the Brown Act does authorize closed sessions related to specified types of contracts (e.g., specified provisions of real property agreements, employee labor agreements, and litigation settlement agreements),⁴ the Brown Act does not authorize closed sessions for other contract negotiations.

Agendas and reports

Closed session items must be briefly described on the posted agenda and the description must state the specific statutory exemption.⁵ An item that appears on the open meeting portion of the agenda may not be taken into closed session until it has been properly agendized as a closed session item or unless it is properly added as a closed session item by a two-thirds vote of the body after making the appropriate urgency findings.⁶

The Brown Act supplies a series of fill in the blank sample agenda descriptions for various types of authorized closed sessions, which provide a “safe harbor” from legal attacks. These sample

agenda descriptions cover license and permit determinations, real property negotiations, existing or anticipated litigation, liability claims, threats to security, public employee appointments, evaluations and discipline, labor negotiations, multi-jurisdictional law enforcement cases, hospital boards of directors, medical quality assurance committees, joint powers agencies, and audits by the California State Auditor's Office.⁷

If the legislative body intends to convene in closed session, it must include the section of the Brown Act authorizing the closed session in advance on the agenda and it must make a public announcement prior to the closed session discussion. In most cases, the announcement may simply be a reference to the agenda item.⁸

Following a closed session, the legislative body must provide an oral or written report on certain actions taken and the vote of every elected member present. The timing and content of the report varies according to the reason for the closed session and the action taken.⁹ The announcements may be made at the site of the closed session, so long as the public is allowed to be present to hear them.

If there is a standing or written request for documentation, any copies of contracts, settlement agreements, or other documents finally approved or adopted in closed session must be provided to the requestor(s) after the closed session, if final approval of such documents does not rest with any other party to the contract or settlement. If substantive amendments to a contract or settlement agreement approved by all parties requires retyping, such documents may be held until retyping is completed during normal business hours, but the substance of the changes must be summarized for any person inquiring about them.¹⁰

The Brown Act does not require minutes, including minutes of closed sessions. However, a legislative body may adopt an ordinance or resolution to authorize a confidential "minute book" be kept to record actions taken at closed sessions.¹¹ If one is kept, it must be made available to members of the legislative body, provided that the member asking to review minutes of a particular meeting was not disqualified from attending the meeting due to a conflict of interest.¹² A court may order the disclosure of minute books for the court's review if a lawsuit makes sufficient claims of an open meeting violation.

Litigation

There is an attorney/client relationship, and legal counsel may use it to protect the confidentiality of privileged written and oral communications to members of the legislative body — outside of meetings. But protection of the attorney/client privilege cannot by itself be the reason for a closed session.¹³

The Brown Act expressly authorizes closed sessions to discuss what is considered pending litigation. The rules that apply to holding a litigation closed session involve complex, technical definitions and procedures. The essential thing to know is that a closed session can be held by the body to confer with, or receive advice from, its legal counsel when open discussion would prejudice the position of the local agency in litigation in which the agency is, or could become, a party.¹⁴ The litigation exception under the Brown Act is narrowly construed and does not permit activities beyond a legislative body's conferring with its own legal counsel and required support staff.¹⁵ For example, it is not permissible to hold a closed session in which settlement negotiations take place between a legislative body, a representative of an adverse party, and a mediator.¹⁶

PRACTICE TIP: Pay close attention to closed session agenda descriptions. Using the wrong label can lead to invalidation of an action taken in closed session if not substantially compliant.

CHAPTER 5: CLOSED SESSIONS

The California Attorney General has opined that if the agency's attorney is not a participant, a litigation closed session cannot be held.¹⁷ In any event, local agency officials should always consult the agency's attorney before placing this type of closed session on the agenda in order to be certain that it is being done properly.

Before holding a closed session under the pending litigation exception, the legislative body must publicly state the basis for the closed session by identifying one of the following three types of matters: existing litigation, anticipated exposure to litigation, or anticipated initiation of litigation.¹⁸

Existing litigation

- Q.** May the legislative body agree to settle a lawsuit in a properly-noticed closed session, without placing the settlement agreement on an open session agenda for public approval?
- A.** *Yes, but the settlement agreement is a public document and must be disclosed on request. Furthermore, a settlement agreement cannot commit the agency to matters that are required to have public hearings.*

Existing litigation includes any adjudicatory proceedings before a court, administrative body exercising its adjudicatory authority, hearing officer, or arbitrator. The clearest situation in which a closed session is authorized is when the local agency meets with its legal counsel to discuss a pending matter that has been filed in a court or with an administrative agency and names the local

agency as a party. The legislative body may meet under these circumstances to receive updates on the case from attorneys, participate in developing strategy as the case develops, or consider alternatives for resolution of the case. Generally, an agreement to settle litigation may be approved in closed session. However, an agreement to settle litigation cannot be approved in closed session if it commits the city to take an action that is required to have a public hearing.¹⁹

Anticipated exposure to litigation against the local agency

Closed sessions are authorized for legal counsel to inform the legislative body of a significant exposure to litigation against the local agency, but only if based on "existing facts and circumstances" as defined by the Brown Act.²⁰ The legislative body may also meet under this exception to determine whether a closed session is authorized based on information provided by legal counsel or staff. In general, the "existing facts and

circumstances" must be publicly disclosed unless they are privileged written communications or not yet known to a potential plaintiff.

Anticipated initiation of litigation by the local agency

A closed session may be held under the exception for the anticipated initiation of litigation when the legislative body seeks legal advice on whether to protect the agency's rights and interests by initiating litigation.

Certain actions must be reported in open session at the same meeting following the closed



session. Other actions, as where final approval rests with another party or the court, may be announced when they become final and upon inquiry of any person.²¹ Each agency attorney should be aware of and make the disclosures that are required by the particular circumstances.

Real estate negotiations

A legislative body may meet in closed session with its negotiator to discuss the purchase, sale, exchange, or lease of real property by or for the local agency. A "lease" includes a lease renewal or renegotiation. The purpose is to grant authority to the legislative body's negotiator on price and terms of payment.²² Caution should be exercised to limit discussion to price and terms of payment without straying to other related issues such as site design, architecture, or other aspects of the project for which the transaction is contemplated.²³



Q. May other terms of a real estate transaction, aside from price and terms of payment, be addressed in closed session?

A. *No. However, there are differing opinions over the scope of the phrase "price and terms of payment" in connection with real estate closed sessions. Many agency attorneys argue that any term that directly affects the economic value of the transaction falls within the ambit of "price and terms of payment." Others take a narrower, more literal view of the phrase.*

The agency's negotiator may be a member of the legislative body itself. Prior to the closed session, or on the agenda, the legislative body must identify its negotiators, the real property that the negotiations may concern²⁴ and the names of the parties with whom its negotiator may negotiate.²⁵

After real estate negotiations are concluded, the approval and substance of the agreement must be publicly reported. If its own approval makes the agreement final, the body must report in open session at the public meeting during which the closed session is held. If final approval rests with another party, the local agency must report the approval and the substance of the agreement upon inquiry by any person, as soon as the agency is informed of it.²⁶

"Our population is exploding, and we have to think about new school sites," said Board Member Jefferson.

"Not only that," interjected Board Member Tanaka, "we need to get rid of a couple of our older facilities."

"Well, obviously the place to do that is in a closed session," said Board Member O'Reilly. "Otherwise we're going to set off land speculation. And if we even mention closing a school, parents are going to be in an uproar."

A closed session to discuss potential sites is not authorized by the Brown Act. The exception is limited to meeting with its negotiator over specific sites — which must be identified at an open and public meeting.

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PRACTICE TIP: Discussions of who to appoint to an advisory body and whether or not to censure a fellow member of the legislative body must be held in the open.

Public employment

The Brown Act authorizes a closed session “to consider the appointment, employment, evaluation of performance, discipline, or dismissal of a public employee or to hear complaints or charges brought against the employee.”²⁷ The purpose of this exception — commonly referred to as the “personnel exception” — is to avoid undue publicity or embarrassment for an employee or applicant for employment and to allow full and candid discussion by the legislative body; thus, it is restricted to discussing individuals, not general personnel policies.²⁸ The body must possess the power to appoint, evaluate, or dismiss the employee to hold a closed session under this exception.²⁹ That authority may be delegated to a subsidiary appointed body.³⁰

An employee must be given at least 24 hours notice of any closed session convened to hear specific complaints or charges against him or her. This occurs when the legislative body is reviewing evidence, which could include live testimony, and adjudicating conflicting testimony offered as evidence. A legislative body may examine (or exclude) witnesses,³¹ and the California Attorney General has opined that, when an affected employee and advocate have an official or essential role to play, they may be permitted to participate in the closed session.³² The employee has the right to have the specific complaints and charges discussed in a public session rather than closed session.³³ If the employee is not given the 24-hour prior notice, any disciplinary action is null and void.³⁴

However, an employee is not entitled to notice and a hearing where the purpose of the closed session is to consider a performance evaluation. The Attorney General and the courts have determined that personnel performance evaluations do not constitute complaints and charges, which are more akin to accusations made against a person.³⁵

Q. Must 24 hours notice be given to an employee whose negative performance evaluation is to be considered by the legislative body in closed session?

A. *No, the notice is reserved for situations where the body is to hear complaints and charges from witnesses.*

Correct labeling of the closed session on the agenda is critical. A closed session agenda that identified discussion of an employment contract was not sufficient to allow dismissal of an employee.³⁶ An incorrect agenda description can result in invalidation of an action and much embarrassment.

For purposes of the personnel exception, “employee” specifically includes an officer or an independent contractor who functions as an officer or an employee. Examples of the former include a city manager, district general manager or superintendent. Examples of the latter include a legal counsel or engineer hired on contract to act as local agency attorney or chief engineer.

Elected officials, appointees to the governing body or subsidiary bodies, and independent contractors other than those discussed above are not employees for purposes of the personnel exception.³⁷ Action on individuals who are not “employees” must also be public — including discussing and voting on appointees to committees, or debating the merits of independent contractors, or considering a complaint against a member of the legislative body itself.

The personnel exception specifically prohibits discussion or action on proposed compensation in closed session, except for a disciplinary reduction in pay. Among other things, that means there can be no personnel closed sessions on a salary change (other than a disciplinary reduction) between any unrepresented individual and the legislative body. However, a legislative body may address the compensation of an unrepresented individual, such as a city manager, in a closed session as part of a labor negotiation (discussed later in this chapter), yet another example of the importance of using correct agenda descriptions.

Reclassification of a job must be public, but an employee's ability to fill that job may be considered in closed session.

Any closed session action to appoint, employ, dismiss, accept the resignation of, or otherwise affect the employment status of a public employee must be reported at the public meeting during which the closed session is held. That report must identify the title of the position, but not the names of all persons considered for an employment position.³⁸ However, a report on a dismissal or non-renewal of an employment contract must be deferred until administrative remedies, if any, are exhausted.³⁹

"I have some important news to announce," said Mayor Garcia. "We've decided to terminate the contract of the city manager, effective immediately. The council has met in closed session and we've negotiated six months severance pay."

"Unfortunately, that has some serious budget consequences, so we've had to delay phase two of the East Area Project."

This may be an improper use of the personnel closed session if the council agenda described the item as the city manager's evaluation. In addition, other than labor negotiations, any action on individual compensation must be taken in open session. Caution should be exercised to not discuss in closed session issues, such as budget impacts in this hypothetical, beyond the scope of the posted closed session notice.

Labor negotiations

The Brown Act allows closed sessions for some aspects of labor negotiations. Different provisions (discussed below) apply to school and community college districts.

A legislative body may meet in closed session to instruct its bargaining representatives, which may be one or more of its members,⁴⁰ on employee salaries and fringe benefits for both represented ("union") and non-represented employees. For represented employees, it may also consider working conditions that by law require negotiation. For the purpose of labor negotiation closed sessions, an "employee" includes an officer or an independent contractor who functions as an officer or an employee, but independent contractors who do not serve in the capacity of an officer or employee are not covered by this closed session exception.⁴¹

These closed sessions may take place before or during negotiations with employee representatives. Prior to the closed session, the legislative body must hold an open and public session in which it identifies its designated representatives.

PRACTICE TIP: The personnel exception specifically prohibits discussion or action on proposed compensation in closed session except for a disciplinary reduction in pay.

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PRACTICE TIP: Prior to the closed session, the legislative body must hold an open and public session in which it identifies its designated representatives.

During its discussions with representatives on salaries and fringe benefits, the legislative body may also discuss available funds and funding priorities, but only to instruct its representative. The body may also meet in closed session with a conciliator who has intervened in negotiations.⁴²

The approval of an agreement concluding labor negotiations with represented employees must be reported after the agreement is final and has been accepted or ratified by the other party. The report must identify the item approved and the other party or parties to the negotiation.⁴³ The labor closed sessions specifically cannot include final action on proposed compensation of one or more unrepresented employees.

Labor negotiations — school and community college districts

Employee relations for school districts and community college districts are governed by the Rodda Act, where different meeting and special notice provisions apply. The entire board, for example, may negotiate in closed sessions.

Four types of meetings are exempted from compliance with the Rodda Act:

1. A negotiating session with a recognized or certified employee organization;
2. A meeting of a mediator with either side;
3. A hearing or meeting held by a fact finder or arbitrator; and
4. A session between the board and its bargaining agent, or the board alone, to discuss its position regarding employee working conditions and instruct its agent.⁴⁴

Public participation under the Rodda Act also takes another form.⁴⁵ All initial proposals of both sides must be presented at public meetings and are public records. The public must be given reasonable time to inform itself and to express its views before the district may adopt its initial proposal. In addition, new topics of negotiations must be made public within 24 hours. Any votes on such a topic must be followed within 24 hours by public disclosure of the vote of each member.⁴⁶ The final vote must be in public.

Other Education Code exceptions

The Education Code governs student disciplinary meetings by boards of school districts and community college districts. District boards may hold a closed session to consider the suspension or discipline of a student, if a public hearing would reveal personal, disciplinary, or academic information about the student contrary to state and federal pupil privacy law. The student's parent or guardian may request an open meeting.⁴⁷

Community college districts may also hold closed sessions to discuss some student disciplinary matters, awarding of honorary degrees, or gifts from donors who prefer to remain anonymous.⁴⁸ Kindergarten through 12th grade districts may also meet in closed session to review the contents of the statewide assessment instrument.⁴⁹

PRACTICE TIP: Attendance by the entire legislative body before a grand jury would not constitute a closed session meeting under the Brown Act.

Joint Powers Authorities

The legislative body of a joint powers authority may adopt a policy regarding limitations on disclosure of confidential information obtained in closed session, and may meet in closed session to discuss information that is subject to the policy.⁵⁰

License applicants with criminal records

A closed session is permitted when an applicant, who has a criminal record, applies for a license or license renewal and the legislative body wishes to discuss whether the applicant is sufficiently rehabilitated to receive the license. The applicant and the applicant's attorney are authorized to attend the closed session meeting. If the body decides to deny the license, the applicant may withdraw the application. If the applicant does not withdraw, the body must deny the license in public, immediately or at its next meeting. No information from the closed session can be revealed without consent of the applicant, unless the applicant takes action to challenge the denial.⁵¹

Public security

Legislative bodies may meet in closed session to discuss matters posing a threat to the security of public buildings, essential public services, including water, sewer, gas, or electric service, or to the public's right of access to public services or facilities over which the legislative body has jurisdiction. Closed session meetings for these purposes must be held with designated security or law enforcement officials including the Governor, Attorney General, district attorney, agency attorney, sheriff or chief of police, or their deputies or agency security consultant or security operations manager.⁵² Action taken in closed session with respect to such public security issues is not reportable action.



Multijurisdictional law enforcement agency

A joint powers agency formed to provide law enforcement services (involving drugs; gangs; sex crimes; firearms trafficking; felony possession of a firearm; high technology, computer, or identity theft; human trafficking; or vehicle theft) to multiple jurisdictions may hold closed sessions to discuss case records of an on-going criminal investigation, to hear testimony from persons involved in the investigation, and to discuss courses of action in particular cases.⁵³

The exception applies to the legislative body of the joint powers agency and to any body advisory to it. The purpose is to prevent impairment of investigations, to protect witnesses and informants, and to permit discussion of effective courses of action.⁵⁴

Hospital peer review and trade secrets

Two specific kinds of closed sessions are allowed for district hospitals and municipal hospitals, under other provisions of law.⁵⁵

1. A meeting to hear reports of hospital medical audit or quality assurance committees, or for related deliberations. However, an applicant or medical staff member whose staff privileges are the direct subject of a hearing may request a public hearing.
2. A meeting to discuss "reports involving trade secrets" — provided no action is taken.

A "trade secret" is defined as information which is not generally known to the public or competitors and which: 1) "derives independent economic value, actual or potential" by virtue of its restricted knowledge; 2) is necessary to initiate a new hospital service or program or facility; and 3) would, if prematurely disclosed, create a substantial probability of depriving the hospital of a substantial economic benefit.

The provision prohibits use of closed sessions to discuss transitions in ownership or management, or the district's dissolution.⁵⁶

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Other legislative bases for closed session

Since any closed session meeting of a legislative body must be authorized by the Legislature, it is important to carefully review the Brown Act to determine if there is a provision that authorizes a closed session for a particular subject matter. There are some less frequently encountered topics that are authorized to be discussed by a legislative body in closed session under the Brown Act, including: a response to a confidential final draft audit report from the Bureau of State Audits,⁵⁷ consideration of the purchase or sale of particular pension fund investments by a legislative body of a local agency that invests pension funds,⁵⁸ hearing a charge or complaint from a member enrolled in a health plan by a legislative body of a local agency that provides Medi-Cal services,⁵⁹ discussions by a county board of supervisors that governs a health plan licensed pursuant to the Knox-Keene Health Care Services Plan Act related to trade secrets or contract negotiations

concerning rates of payment,⁶⁰ and discussions by an insurance pooling joint powers agency related to a claim filed against, or liability of, the agency or a member of the agency.⁶¹

PRACTICE TIP: Meetings are either open or closed. There is nothing “in between.”⁶²

Who may attend closed sessions

Meetings of a legislative body are either fully open or fully closed; there is nothing in between. Therefore, local agency officials and employees must pay particular attention to the authorized attendees for the particular type of closed session. As summarized above, the authorized attendees may differ based on the topic of the closed session. Closed sessions may involve only the members of the legislative body and only agency counsel, management and support staff, and consultants necessary for consideration of the matter that is the subject of closed session, with very limited exceptions for adversaries or witnesses with official roles in particular types of hearings (e.g., personnel disciplinary hearings and license hearings). In any case, individuals who do not have an official role in the closed session subject matters must be excluded from closed sessions.⁶³

Q. May the lawyer for someone suing the agency attend a closed session in order to explain to the legislative body why it should accept a settlement offer?

A. *No, attendance in closed sessions is reserved exclusively for the agency’s advisors.*

The confidentiality of closed session discussions

The Brown Act explicitly prohibits the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information acquired in a closed session by any person present, and offers various remedies to address breaches of confidentiality.⁶⁴ It is incumbent upon all those attending lawful closed sessions to protect the confidentiality of those discussions. One court has held that members of a legislative body cannot be compelled to divulge the content of closed session discussions through the discovery process.⁶⁵ Only the legislative body acting as a body may agree to divulge confidential closed session information; regarding attorney/client privileged communications, the entire body is the holder of the privilege and only the entire body can decide to waive the privilege.⁶⁶

Before adoption of the Brown Act provision specifically prohibiting disclosure of closed session communications, agency attorneys and the Attorney General long opined that officials have a fiduciary duty to protect the confidentiality of closed session discussions. The Attorney General issued an opinion that it is “improper” for officials to disclose information received during a closed session regarding pending litigation,⁶⁷ though the Attorney General has also concluded that a local agency is preempted from adopting an ordinance criminalizing public disclosure of closed session discussions.⁶⁸ In any event, in 2002, the Brown Act was amended to prescribe particular remedies for breaches of confidentiality. These remedies include injunctive relief; and, if the breach is a willful disclosure of confidential information, the remedies include disciplinary action against an employee, and referral of a member of the legislative body to the grand jury.⁶⁹

The duty of maintaining confidentiality, of course, must give way to the responsibility to disclose improper matters or discussions that may come up in closed sessions. In recognition of this public policy, under the Brown Act, a local agency may not penalize a disclosure of information learned during a closed session if the disclosure: 1) is made in confidence to the district attorney or the grand jury due to a perceived violation of law; 2) is an expression of opinion concerning the propriety or legality of actions taken in closed session, including disclosure of the nature and extent of the illegal action; or 3) is information that is not confidential.⁷⁰

The interplay between these possible sanctions and an official’s first amendment rights is complex and beyond the scope of this guide. Suffice it to say that this is a matter of great sensitivity and controversy.

“I want the press to know that I voted in closed session against filing the eminent domain action,” said Council Member Chang.

“Don’t settle too soon,” reveals Council Member Watson to the property owner, over coffee. “The city’s offer coming your way is not our bottom line.”

The first comment to the press may be appropriate if it is a part of an action taken by the City Council in closed session that must be reported publicly.⁷¹ The second comment to the property owner is not — disclosure of confidential information acquired in closed session is expressly prohibited and harmful to the agency.

PRACTICE TIP: There is a strong interest in protecting the confidentiality of proper and lawful closed sessions.

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ENDNOTES:

- 1 California Government Code section 54962
- 2 California Constitution, Art. 1, section 3
- 3 61 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 220 (1978); but see California Government Code section 54957.8 (multijurisdictional law enforcement agencies are authorized to meet in closed session to discuss the case records of ongoing criminal investigations, and other related matters).
- 4 California Government Code section 54957.1
- 5 California Government Code section 54954.5
- 6 California Government Code section 54954.2
- 7 California Government Code section 54954.5
- 8 California Government Code sections 54956.9 and 54957.7
- 9 California Government Code section 54957.1(a)
- 10 California Government Code section 54957.1(b)
- 11 California Government Code section 54957.2
- 12 *Hamilton v. Town of Los Gatos* (1989) 213 Cal.App.3d 1050; 2 Cal.Code Regs. section 18707
- 13 *Roberts v. City of Palmdale* (1993) 5 Cal.4th 363
- 14 California Government Code section 54956.9; *Shapiro v. Board of Directors of Center City Development Corp.* (2005) 134 Cal.App.4th 170 (agency must be a party to the litigation).
- 15 82 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 29 (1999)
- 16 *Page v. Miracosta Community College District* (2009) 180 Cal.App.4th 471
- 17 “The Brown Act,” California Attorney General (2003), p. 40
- 18 California Government Code section 54956.9(g)
- 19 *Trancas Property Owners Association v. City of Malibu* (2006) 138 Cal.App.4th 172
- 20 Government Code section 54956.9(e)
- 21 California Government Code section 54957.1
- 22 California Government Code section 54956.8
- 23 *Shapiro v. San Diego City Council* (2002) 96 Cal.App.4th 904; see also 93 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 51 (2010) (redevelopment agency may not convene a closed session to discuss rehabilitation loan for a property already subleased to a loan recipient, even if the loan incorporates some of the sublease terms and includes an operating covenant governing the property); 94 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 82 (2011) (real estate closed session may address form, manner and timing of consideration and other items that cannot be disclosed without revealing price and terms).
- 24 73 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 1 (1990)
- 25 California Government Code sections 54956.8 and 54954.5(b)
- 26 California Government Code section 54957.1(a)(1)
- 27 California Government Code section 54957(b)
- 28 63 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 153 (1980); but see *Duvall v. Board of Trustees* (2000) 93 Cal.App.4th 902 (board may discuss personnel evaluation criteria, process and other preliminary matters in closed session but only if related to the evaluation of a particular employee).
- 29 *Gillespie v. San Francisco Public Library Commission* (1998) 67 Cal.App.4th 1165; 85 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 77 (2002)
- 30 *Gillespie v. San Francisco Public Library Commission* (1998) 67 Cal.App.4th 1165; 80 Ops.Cal.Atty. Gen. 308 (1997). Interviews of candidates to fill a vacant staff position conducted by a temporary committee appointed by the governing body may be done in closed session.

- 31 California Government Code section 54957(b)(3)
- 32 88 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 16 (2005)
- 33 *Morrison v. Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles* (2003) 107 Cal.App.4th 860
- 34 California Government Code section 54957(b); but see *Bollinger v. San Diego Civil Service Commission* (1999) 71 Cal.App.4th 568 (notice not required for closed session deliberations regarding complaints or charges, when there was a public evidentiary hearing prior to closed session).
- 35 78 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 218 (1995); *Bell v. Vista Unified School District* (2000) 82 Cal.App.4th 672; *Furtado v. Sierra Community College* (1998) 68 Cal.App.4th 876; *Fischer v. Los Angeles Unified School District* (1999) 70 Cal.App.4th 87
- 36 *Moreno v. City of King* (2005) 127 Cal.App.4th 17
- 37 California Government Code section 54957
- 38 *Gillespie v. San Francisco Public Library Commission* (1998) 67 Cal.App.4th 1165
- 39 California Government Code section 54957.1(a)(5)
- 40 California Government Code section 54957.6
- 41 California Government Code section 54957.6(b); see also 98 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 41 (2015) (a project labor agreement between a community college district and workers hired by contractors or subcontractors is not a proper subject of closed session for labor negotiations because the workers are not “employees” of the district).
- 42 California Government Code section 54957.6; and 51 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 201 (1968)
- 43 California Government Code section 54957.1(a)(6)
- 44 California Government Code section 3549.1
- 45 California Government Code section 3540
- 46 California Government Code section 3547
- 47 California Education Code section 48918; but see *Rim of the World Unified School District v. Superior Court* (2003) 104 Cal.App.4th 1393 (Section 48918 preempted by the Federal Family Educational Right and Privacy Act in regard to expulsion proceedings).
- 48 California Education Code section 72122
- 49 California Education Code section 60617
- 50 California Government Code section 54956.96
- 51 California Government Code section 54956.7
- 52 California Government Code section 54957
- 53 *McKee v. Los Angeles Interagency Metropolitan Police Apprehension Crime Task Force* (2005) 134 Cal. App.4th 354
- 54 California Government Code section 54957.8
- 55 California Government Code section 54962
- 56 California Health and Safety Code section 32106
- 57 California Government Code section 54956.75
- 58 California Government Code section 54956.81
- 59 California Government Code section 54956.86
- 60 California Government Code section 54956.87
- 61 California Government Code section 54956.95
- 62 46 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 34 (1965)
- 63 82 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 29 (1999)

CHAPTER 5: CLOSED SESSIONS

- 64 Government Code section 54963
- 65 *Kleitman v. Superior Court* (1999) 74 Cal.App.4th 324, 327; see also California Government Code section 54963.
- 66 *Roberts v. City of Palmdale* (1993) 5 Cal.4th 363
- 67 80 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 231 (1997)
- 68 76 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 289 (1993)
- 69 California Government Code section 54963
- 70 California Government Code section 54963
- 71 California Government Code section 54957.1

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Chapter 6

REMEDIES



Certain violations of the Brown Act are designated as misdemeanors, although by far the most commonly used enforcement provisions are those that authorize civil actions to invalidate specified actions taken in violation of the Brown Act and to stop or prevent future violations. Still, despite all the safeguards and remedies to enforce them, it is ultimately impossible for the public to monitor every aspect of public officials' interactions. Compliance ultimately results from regular training and a good measure of self-regulation on the part of public officials. This chapter discusses the remedies available to the public when that self-regulation is ineffective.

Invalidation

Any interested person, including the district attorney, may seek to invalidate certain actions of a legislative body on the ground that they violate the Brown Act.¹ Violations of the Brown Act, however, cannot be invalidated if they involve the following types of actions:

- Those taken in substantial compliance with the law. No Brown Act violation is found when the given notice substantially complies with the Brown Act, even when the notice erroneously cites to the wrong Brown Act section, but adequately advises the public that the Board will meet with legal counsel to discuss potential litigation in closed session;²
- Those involving the sale or issuance of notes, bonds or other indebtedness, or any related contracts or agreements;
- Those creating a contractual obligation, including a contract awarded by competitive bid for other than compensation for professional services, upon which a party has in good faith relied to its detriment;
- Those connected with the collection of any tax; or
- Those in which the complaining party had actual notice at least 72 hours prior to the regular meeting or 24 hours prior to the special meeting, as the case may be, at which the action is taken.

Before filing a court action seeking invalidation, a person who believes that a violation has occurred must send a written "cure or correct" demand to the legislative body. This demand must clearly describe the challenged action and the nature of the claimed violation. This demand must be sent within 90 days of the alleged violation or 30 days if the action was taken in open session but in violation of Section 54954.2, which requires (subject to specific exceptions) that only properly agendaized items are acted on by the governing body during a meeting.³ The legislative body then has up to 30 days to cure and correct its action. If it does not act, any lawsuit must be filed within the next 15 days. The purpose of this requirement is to offer the body an opportunity to consider whether a violation has occurred and to weigh its options before litigation is filed.

Although just about anyone has standing to bring an action for invalidation,⁴ the challenger must show prejudice as a result of the alleged violation.⁵ An action to invalidate fails to state a cause of action against the agency if the body deliberated but did not take an action.⁶

Applicability to Past Actions

Any interested person, including the district attorney, may file a civil action to determine whether past actions of a legislative body occurring on or after January 1, 2013 constitute violations of the Brown Act and are subject to a mandamus, injunction, or declaratory relief action.⁷ Before filing an action, the interested person must, within nine months of the alleged violation of the Brown Act, submit a “cease and desist” letter to the legislative body, clearly describing the past action and the nature of the alleged violation.⁸ The legislative body has 30 days after receipt of the letter to provide an unconditional commitment to cease and desist from the past action.⁹ If the body fails to take any action within the 30-day period or takes an action other than an unconditional commitment, a lawsuit may be filed within 60 days.¹⁰

The legislative body’s unconditional commitment must be approved at a regular or special meeting as a separate item of business and not on the consent calendar.¹¹ The unconditional commitment must be substantially in the form set forth in the Brown Act.¹² No legal action may thereafter be commenced regarding the past action.¹³ However, an action of the legislative body in violation of its unconditional commitment constitutes an independent violation of the Brown Act and a legal action consequently may be commenced without following the procedural requirements for challenging past actions.¹⁴

The legislative body may rescind its prior unconditional commitment by a majority vote of its membership at a regular meeting as a separate item of business not on the consent calendar. At least 30 days written notice of the intended rescission must be given to each person to whom the unconditional commitment was made and to the district attorney. Upon rescission, any interested person may commence a legal action regarding the past actions without following the procedural requirements for challenging past actions.¹⁵

Civil action to prevent future violations

The district attorney or any interested person can file a civil action asking the court to:

- Stop or prevent violations or threatened violations of the Brown Act by members of the legislative body of a local agency;
- Determine the applicability of the Brown Act to actions or threatened future action of the legislative body;
- Determine whether any rule or action by the legislative body to penalize or otherwise discourage the expression of one or more of its members is valid under state or federal law; or
- Compel the legislative body to tape record its closed sessions.

PRACTICE TIP: A lawsuit to invalidate must be preceded by a demand to cure and correct the challenged action in order to give the legislative body an opportunity to consider its options. The Brown Act does not specify how to cure or correct a violation; the best method is to rescind the action being complained of and start over, or reaffirm the action if the local agency relied on the action and rescinding the action would prejudice the local agency.

CHAPTER 6: REMEDIES



It is not necessary for a challenger to prove a past pattern or practice of violations by the local agency in order to obtain injunctive relief. A court may presume when issuing an injunction that a single violation will continue in the future where the public agency refuses to admit to the alleged violation or to renounce or curtail the practice.¹⁶ Note, however, that a court may not compel elected officials to disclose their recollections of what transpired in a closed session.¹⁷

Upon finding a violation of the Brown Act pertaining to closed sessions, a court may compel the legislative body to tape record its future closed sessions. In a subsequent lawsuit to enforce the Brown Act alleging a violation occurring in closed session, a court may upon motion of the plaintiff review the tapes if there is good cause to think the Brown Act has been violated, and make public the relevant portion of the closed session recording.

Costs and attorney's fees

Someone who successfully invalidates an action taken in violation of the Brown Act or who successfully enforces one of the Brown Act's civil remedies may seek court costs and reasonable attorney's fees. Courts have held that attorney's fees must be awarded to a successful plaintiff unless special circumstances exist that would make a fee award against the public agency unjust.¹⁸ When evaluating how to respond to assertions that the Brown Act has been violated, elected officials and their lawyers should assume that attorney's fees will be awarded against the agency if a violation of the Act is proven.

An attorney's fee award may only be directed against the local agency and not the individual members of the legislative body. If the local agency prevails, it may be awarded court costs and attorney's fees if the court finds the lawsuit was clearly frivolous and lacking in merit.¹⁹

Criminal complaints

A violation of the Brown Act by a member of the legislative body who acts with the improper intent described below is punishable as a misdemeanor.²⁰

A criminal violation has two components. The first is that there must be an overt act — a member of a legislative body must attend a meeting at which action is taken in violation of the Brown Act.²¹

"Action taken" is not only an actual vote, but also a collective decision, commitment or promise by a majority of the legislative body to make a positive or negative decision.²² If the meeting involves mere deliberation without the taking of action, there can be no misdemeanor penalty.

A violation occurs for a tentative as well as final decision.²³ In fact, criminal liability is triggered by a member's participation in a meeting in violation of the Brown Act — not whether that member has voted with the majority or minority, or has voted at all.

The second component of a criminal violation is that action is taken with the intent of a member "to deprive the public of information to which the member knows or has reason to know the public is entitled" by the Brown Act.²⁴

PRACTICE TIP: Attorney's fees will likely be awarded if a violation of the Brown Act is proven.

As with other misdemeanors, the filing of a complaint is up to the district attorney. Although criminal prosecutions of the Brown Act are uncommon, district attorneys in some counties aggressively monitor public agencies' adherence to the requirements of the law.

Some attorneys and district attorneys take the position that a Brown Act violation may be pursued criminally under Government Code section 1222.²⁵ There is no case law to support this view; if anything, the existence of an express criminal remedy within the Brown Act would suggest otherwise.²⁶

Voluntary resolution

Arguments over Brown Act issues often become emotional on all sides. Newspapers trumpet relatively minor violations, unhappy residents fume over an action, and legislative bodies clam up about information better discussed in public. Hard lines are drawn and rational discussion breaks down. The district attorney or even the grand jury occasionally becomes involved. Publicity surrounding alleged violations of the Brown Act can result in a loss of confidence by constituents in the legislative body. There are times when it may be preferable to consider re-noticing and rehearing, rather than litigating, an item of significant public interest, particularly when there is any doubt about whether the open meeting requirements were satisfied.

At bottom, agencies that regularly train their officials and pay close attention to the requirements of the Brown Act will have little reason to worry about enforcement.

ENDNOTES:

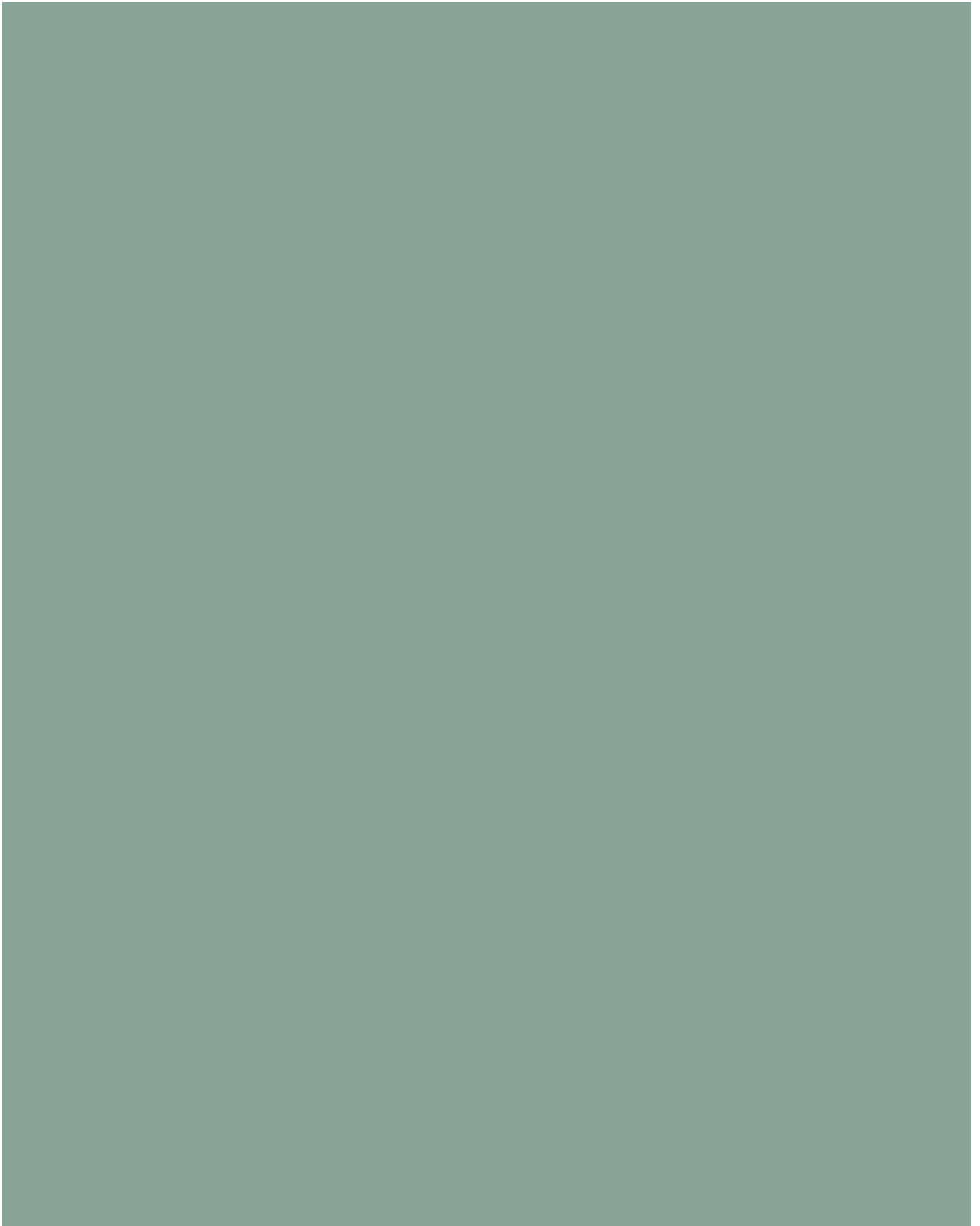
- 1 California Government Code section 54960.1. Invalidation is limited to actions that violate the following sections of the Brown Act: section 54953 (the basic open meeting provision); sections 54954.2 and 54954.5 (notice and agenda requirements for regular meetings and closed sessions); 54954.6 (tax hearings); 54956 (special meetings); and 54596.5 (emergency situations). Violations of sections not listed above cannot give rise to invalidation actions, but are subject to the other remedies listed in section 54960.1.
- 2 *Castaic Lake Water Agency v. Newhall County Water District* (2015) 238 Cal.App.4th 1196, 1198
- 3 California Government Code section 54960.1 (b) and (c)(1)
- 4 *McKee v. Orange Unified School District* (2003) 110 Cal. App.4th 1310, 1318-1319
- 5 *Cohan v. City of Thousand Oaks* (1994) 30 Cal.App.4th 547, 556, 561
- 6 *Boyle v. City of Redondo Beach* (1999) 70 Cal.App.4th 1109, 1116-17, 1118
- 7 Government Code Section 54960.2(a); Senate Bill No. 1003, Section 4 (2011-2012 Session)
- 8 Government Code Sections 54960.2(a)(1), (2)
- 9 Government Code Section 54960.2(b)



CHAPTER 6: REMEDIES

- 10 Government Code Section 54960.2(a)(4)
- 11 Government Code Section 54960.2(c)(2)
- 12 Government Code Section 54960.2(c)(1)
- 13 Government Code Section 54960.2(c)(3)
- 14 Government Code Section 54960.2(d)
- 15 Government Code Section 54960.2(e)
- 16 *California Alliance for Utility Safety and Education (CAUSE) v. City of San Diego* (1997) 56 Cal.App.4th 1024; *Common Cause v. Stirling* (1983) 147 Cal.App.3d 518, 524; *Accord Shapiro v. San Diego City Council* (2002) 96 Cal. App. 4th 904, 916 & fn.6
- 17 *Kleitman v. Superior Court* (1999) 74 Cal.App.4th 324, 334-36
- 18 *Los Angeles Times Communications, LLC v. Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors* (2003) 112 Cal. App.4th 1313, 1327-29 and cases cited therein
- 19 California Government Code section 54960.5
- 20 California Government Code section 54959. A misdemeanor is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or up to six months in county jail, or both. California Penal Code section 19. Employees of the agency who participate in violations of the Brown Act cannot be punished criminally under section 54959. However, at least one district attorney instituted criminal action against employees based on the theory that they criminally conspired with the members of the legislative body to commit a crime under section 54949.
- 21 California Government Code section 54959
- 22 California Government Code section 54952.6
- 23 61 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen.283 (1978)
- 24 California Government Code section 54959
- 25 California Government Code section 1222 provides that “[e]very wilful omission to perform any duty enjoined by law upon any public officer, or person holding any public trust or employment, where no special provision is made for the punishment of such delinquency, is punishable as a misdemeanor.”
- 26 The principle of statutory construction known as *expressio unius est exclusio alterius* supports the view that section 54959 is the exclusive basis for criminal liability under the Brown Act.

Updates to this publication responding to changes in the Brown Act or new court interpretations are available at www.cacities.org/opengovernment. A current version of the Brown Act may be found at www.leginfo.ca.gov.





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Appendix F

Attributes of Exceptional Boards

Leading public organizations and governing with colleagues on a board is a challenging art of community service. The Institute recognizes that many aspects of leadership and governance are not intuitive. This piece is intended to provide board members and administrators/executives insight into the attributes of exceptional boards as well as provide practical tips to help them become exceptional.

1. Exceptional boards develop a sense of team – a partnership with the chief administrator to govern and manage the county

The members of the board and chief administrator/executive see themselves and work as a team as they undertake a series of tasks to further their common purpose. The individual team members work in a coordinated and collaborative manner with a high degree of respect, trust and openness. The team values diversity in style and perspective. The team thinks and acts strategically as it examines issues/situations and decides on a course of action serving their county's mission and goals.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Successfully transition from candidate to a member of the board.
- Become a champion of the county. Make decisions based on the needs and interests of the community at-large / the greater good.
- Develop, communicate and support policy goals and board decisions.
- Demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively (as a team) and have a countywide perspective.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Build capacity to create a more effective team. The governance team (board members and chief administrator/executive) should get to know each other; how each person approaches issues, decision making style and so on. This can be accomplished at annual meetings or workshops throughout the year. In the event that board members disagree, clear ground rules (norms of behavior and practice) can help quell acrimony before it becomes a problem. It's important to remember that trust is built around understanding and respect, not necessarily agreement.

2. Exceptional boards have clear roles and responsibilities that are understood and adhered.

Exceptional boards understand their role is to serve as policy maker - to represent the values, beliefs and priorities of their community while serving in the community's best interest. They carry out a variety of responsibilities including: developing and adopting a vision for the county; focusing and aligning plans, policies, agreements and budgets in furtherance of this vision; and holding themselves and the chief administrator/executive accountable for results.

Exceptional boards understand that the chief administrator/executive is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the county. The chief administrator/executive is responsible for undertaking and accomplishing the policy objectives of the board. Exceptional boards recognize the subject matter expertise of staff and utilize their knowledge and experience to guide and inform decision making.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Understand the role of local government and their responsibilities.
- Know their role - to set vision and policy, avoid micromanagement.
- Board members should strive to be informed about the issues facing the county and be prepared to ask questions of staff and each other.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Create a shared understanding of the chief administrator/executive's role and the board's expectations to optimize the working relationships. This shared understanding is informed by local charter and ordinance provisions that provide the overall framework for the relationship. The board should make time to have conversations during retreats and or study sessions to define and/or reveal and refine their role and responsibilities. Since role clarity between the board and chief administrator/executive is critical to mutual success, having clear protocols helps avoid misunderstandings.

3. Exceptional boards honor the relationship with staff and each other

Exceptional boards understand that a good working relationship with staff is vital to successful operation of the county. Exceptional boards treat each other and staff with dignity and respect. They act with civility and a high level of professional decorum. Board members build trust by not playing the “gotcha game” and strive to have a no secrets, no surprises approach as an operating norm. Finally, they respect the diversity of styles and perspectives among their colleagues and staff and are open to new ideas.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Board members have the ability to respectfully disagree (to disagree without being disagreeable). They are able to leave it at the dais; debates are about policy, not personality.
- Exceptional board members reflect positive decorum/model of leadership by providing respectful tone with colleagues.
- Establish a set of behaviors ahead of time, potentially documented in a code of conduct, to help promote civility and respect.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Set board priorities and strategic goals at an annual meeting; these goals and priorities are a tool to guide the chief administrator/executive and staff on where to focus their efforts. This annual meeting provides time for the board to reflect on community priorities as well as offer an opportunity to discuss their decorum and their relationship among each other and the relationship between the chief administrator/executive, staff and the board.

4. Exceptional boards routinely conduct effective meetings

Open and public meetings are central to democratic decision-making. Exceptional boards master the art of effective meetings. They develop and adhere to meeting protocols and processes. They spend time planning and organizing the agenda with the aim of having a more focused meeting. They allocate the board's time and energy appropriately (focused on the board's role and responsibilities) and meeting short- and long-term priorities. They honor the public's participation and engagement and they generally start on time and are held during reasonable hours.

Exceptional boards use public meetings not only for their intended purpose, information sharing and decision-making, but they also use the meeting to demonstrate respect and

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Board members are respectful of each other, the public and everyone's time.
- Board members use engaging body language as a way to demonstrate respect.
- Issues are not personalized, thoughtful dialogue is the objective.
- Agenda packets are read, board members come prepared and have an open mind.
- Respect is demonstrated for varied opinions.
- Everyone strives to be civil and act with decorum.

civility for each other, staff and the public. Exceptional board members prepare in advance of the meeting, remain focused on the county goals and objectives and mindful of their role and responsibilities.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Develop and adopt (with regular reviews and updates), guidelines for conducting meetings and making decisions. These governance protocols typically address meeting procedures (agenda preparation, how to put issues on the agenda, debate and voting procedures (parliamentary rules) and standards of decorum (civility). As part of a regular self-assessment, boards should evaluate their meetings and their effectiveness and adjust behavior and practices for better results.

5. Exceptional boards hold themselves and the county accountable

Exceptional boards operate openly, ethically and work to engage the community in a myriad of decisions impacting the prosperity and well-being of their community. Toward that end, exceptional boards consistently provide short- and long-term strategic direction and goals, as well as provide budget, program and policy oversight.

Exceptional boards hold themselves accountable for the conduct, behavior and effectiveness of the governing body. They establish clear priorities and goals and hold the chief administrator/executive accountable for results. Finally, they embrace accountability as a process and tool to calibrate ongoing efforts to address and meet policy and program objectives.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Board members operate ethically and with integrity.
- Boards conduct team building / goal setting exercise to track progress towards mutually agreed upon goals.
- Boards take responsibility for the results (good and bad).
- Boards celebrate success.
- Board members hold themselves responsible for adhering to operating protocols and codes of conduct.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Annually evaluate board and chief administrator/executive performance toward achieving the county's priorities and goals (consider having this be part of an annual goal setting meeting). Boards should consider assessing its own behavior and effectiveness as part of its annual self-assessment.

6. Exceptional boards have members who practice continuous personal learning and development

Governance is not intuitive. In addition, the policy and economic environment impacting counties is ever changing. Exceptional boards continually provide the opportunity to build their knowledge and skills, enhance their understanding of key issues, increase their awareness of best practices and sharpen their leadership and governance skills.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Stay informed on key issues.
- Gain key insights and knowledge on all aspects of governing, from budgets to plans and everything in between.
- Learning to listen is sometimes more important than learning to give a speech.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Seek out national, state and local professional growth and educational opportunities. These opportunities can focus on the nuts and bolts of governing to help you gain valuable information and/or insights on key policy issues facing your county. In addition, county run orientations for newly elected officials provide a good way to acclimate new members to the board's norms and protocols as well as the budget and key policy issues.

About the Institute for Local Government

The Institute for Local Government (ILG) is the nonprofit 501(c)3 research and education affiliate of the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties and the California Special Districts Association. Our mission is to promote good government at the local level with practical, impartial and easy-to-use resources for California communities.

Visit www.ca-ilg.org to find out more.

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Appendix G

City of St. Helena

Vision Statement

The City of St. Helena will strive to be economically sustainable, and continue to be family-friendly, diverse and safe community which prudently manages its financial and human resources, continues to upkeep and improve its infrastructure, ensures its water security, provides a full range of housing, business, cultural and recreational opportunities and embraces and retains its historic, small-town character, beautiful natural environment and high quality of life.

Mission Statement

The City of St. Helena is dedicated to serving the needs and desires of our citizens by:

- Maintaining and improving our short and long-term economic sustainability
- Offering excellent professional services to all customers
- Establishing, improving and maintaining City infrastructure
- Maintaining and encouraging an environmentally sustainable community
- Preserving and embracing the historic, small-town, rural character of St Helena.
- Expanding and improving recreational services and facilities and cultural opportunities
- Encouraging a wide range of innovative, well-designed housing available for residents of all ages and income levels
- Facilitating full civic participation and ongoing communication
- Strengthening partnerships with the private, non-profit and public sectors

Vision and Mission Statements adopted by the City of St. Helena City Council on April 12, 2016, Resolution No. 2016-47.



Supplemental Information

August 2020

	City of St. Helena Standard Operating Procedure Finance	SOP Application and Use of Exception Permits Water Emergency Page 1 of 4
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Title: Application and Use of Exception Permits – Water Emergencies	Policy #	SOP-FI-0019
	Revision #	Release
	Implementation Date	2020-04-
	Last Update Date	2020-04-
Approval by:		Date Approved 2020-04-

I. Purpose, Overview and Scope of this SOP

This SOP is to establish procedures for application for and use of exception permits as prescribed in St. Helena Municipal Code (SHMC) Section 13.04.280.

Under a Phase II or Phase III water emergency, the director of public works shall, with such conditions as seem to him or her to be reasonable, grant exception permits in addition to any basic allocation, on application of a water customer submitted under penalty of perjury, based on the conditions defined in SHMC Section 13.04.280.

II. Authority

The Water Advisory Board has authority to update this procedure.

III. Procedure

A. Prequalified for exception.

1. For any customer with an allocation based on previous water use, if it can be demonstrated that water conservation measures beyond those required in SHMC Chapter 13.12 were in place prior to the preceding nonshortage year. An additional quantity of water may be allocated to recognize the higher efficiency in place prior to the water emergency condition.
 - a. Certification samples:
 1. Date of installation of water conservation measure(s);
 2. Description of water conservation measure(s);
 3. Proof of water conservation measure(s) (receipts, permits, show reduction in water consumption);
 4. Site visit by City staff.
2. Non-residential customers with irrigation and domestic use provided by the same water meter may receive an additional landscape allocation of up to 70 gallons (Phase II) per day per 1,000 square feet of landscaped area during April through October by documenting the landscaped square footage served by city water.
 - a. Certification samples:
 1. Photos of landscaped area;

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2. Mapped square footage of landscaped area;
3. Site visit by City staff.
3. For single-family residential parcels exceeding 7,000 square feet in area, the quantity of up to 20 gallons per day for each 1,000 square feet that the property area exceeds 7,000 square feet for the purpose of maintaining mature landscape or orchard plants (max 250 gallons per day for this purpose).
 - a. Certification samples:
 1. Proof parcel exceeds 7,000 square feet;
 2. Proof of mature landscape or orchard plants (photo);
 3. Site visit by City staff.
4. For medical conditions of a resident, a quantity as required to maintain health standards.
 - a. Certification samples:
 1. Certification from a health care professional;
 2. Proof of equipment needed, and water required.
5. For any customer with an allocation based on previous winter water use, if it can be demonstrated that efficient and essential water uses are not represented in average winter water use, and additional quantity of water may be allocated to provide for these efficient and essential needs.
 - a. Certification samples:
 1. Average annual use by month (City can pull records);
 2. Verification the winter water use allocation is not represented for normal or seasonal use;
 3. Proposal to achieve overall reduction.

B. Permits for Uses of Water or for Exceptions to Water Conservation Measures or for Water Connections Otherwise Prohibited by SHMC Sections 13.04.230, 13.04.240, and 13.04.250.

1. The Water Advisory Board may grant permits if it finds and determines that such regulations would:
 - a. Cause an unnecessary and undue hardship to the applicant or to the public;
 - b. Cause an emergency condition affecting the health, sanitation, fire protection, or safety of the applicant or public; or
 - c. Promote water conservation by providing for the establishment of water efficient landscaping meeting the standards of SHMC Section 17.112.140 and such policies and regulations as have been adopted to implement the provisions of that chapter, replacing more water-intensive landscaping.

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IV. Attachments

1. Application for Exception Permit

DRAFT

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Attachment 1 – Application for Exception Permit

DRAFT

SOP-FI-0021



Water Exception Permit Form

DATE SUBMITTED: _____

RECEIVED BY: _____

PROPERTY & BILLING INFORMATION			
Date Applying		Customer or Company Name	
Account Number	Phone Number	Email Address	
Mailing Address	City	State	Zip Code
TYPE OF EXCEPTION REQUEST – CHECK ALL THAT APPLY			
☐	Allocation based on previous water use - it can be demonstrated that water conservation measures beyond those required in Chapter 13.12 were in place prior to the preceding nonshortage year. An additional quantity of water may be allocated to recognize the higher efficiency in place prior to the water emergency condition.		
☐	Allocation based on previous winter water use - it can be demonstrated that efficient and essential water uses are not represented in average winter water use.		
☐	Irrigation – Non-residential customers with irrigation and domestic use provided by the same water meter may receive an additional landscape allocation of up to 70 gallons (Phase II) per day per 1,000 square feet of landscaped area during April through October by documenting the landscaped square footage served by city water.		
☐	Single-family residential - parcels exceeding seven thousand (7,000) square feet in area, the quantity of up to twenty (20) gallons per day for each one thousand (1,000) square feet that the property area exceeds seven thousand (7,000) square feet for the purpose of maintaining mature landscape or orchard plants.		
☐	For medical conditions of a resident, a quantity as required to maintain health standards.		
Additional Amount Requested (if known):		Check One: ____ HCF -or- ____ Gallons	
Additional supporting information/considerations (please attach any additional supporting documentation):			

Updated 04/05/2021

PLEASE READ AND SIGN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS AS ACKNOWLEDGED AND REQUIRED BY THIS AGREEMENT			
If this condition is granted, I agree to: • Customers must submit a request in writing to the Director of Public Works; • Adhere to all specific requirements contained within the exception; and • Any other specified conditions as determined by the City of St. Helena or Water Advisory Board			
Name:		Signature	
		Date	
PLEASE SUBMIT APPLICATIONS TO:		QUESTIONS?	
City of St. Helena: Public Works 1572 Railroad Avenue St. Helena, CA 95404		Email: mbeltran@cityofsthenela.org Website: www.cityofsthenela.org/Phaseii Phone: 707-967-2746	
STAFF USE ONLY			
Water use exception is hereby: ☐ Approved ☐ Denied			
Details of exception granted, including additional allocation:			
DRAFT			
If denied, reason for denial:			
Approved by (check one):		☐ Public Works Director	
		☐ Water Advisory Board	