

Oregon's Public Meetings Law: Quick Reference Guide

Board members need to be aware of Oregon's Public Meetings Law. This law requires that decisions made by the governing bodies of public bodies be made in the open. This includes meetings where the sole purpose is to gather information that may be used later to make a decision.

MEETINGS

- Generally, the Oregon law applies to meetings of a governing body “for which a quorum is required in order to make a decision or to deliberate toward a decision on any matter.”
 - For community college boards, a quorum is four board members.
- Meetings must be open to the public and must meet the notice requirements of the law unless there is a specific exception provided (e.g. executive sessions).
- Committees, subcommittee and advisory groups are considered a governing body if they have authority to make consensus recommendation or decision for public body.
- On-site inspections and purely social gatherings are exempt from the law.
- Attendance by members of a governing body at meetings of any national, regional or state association to which the public body or its members belong is not considered a meeting of the public body but college business should not be discussed by a quorum of board members.

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

- A board may be called together exclusively for the purpose of meeting in executive session, or a board may decide to go into executive session at any time during a regular, special or emergency meeting to discuss appropriate subject matters.
- The presiding officer must identify the section and subsection of ORS 192.660 that define the subject matter for which the executive session is authorized.
- The purposes for which an executive session may be held and the correct citations for this authority are as follows. Although there are some exceptions, a community college board may only go into executive session to:
 - Consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent. [ORS 192.660(2)(a)]
 - Consider the dismissal or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or agent, unless the officer, employee, staff member or agent requests an open meeting. [ORS 192.660(2)(b)]
 - Conduct deliberations with a person designated by the governing body to carry on labor negotiations. [ORS 192.660(2)(d)]
 - Deliberate with persons designated to negotiate real property transactions. [ORS 192.660(2)(e)]
 - Consider records that are exempt by law from public inspection. [ORS 192.660(2)(f)]
 - Consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed. [ORS 192.660(2)(h)]
 - Review and evaluate the employment-related performance of the chief executive officer, or any other public officer, employee or staff member unless the person whose performance is being reviewed and evaluated requests an open hearing. [ORS 192.660(2)(i)]
- Representatives of the news media are allowed to attend executive sessions except those convened for labor negotiations. The governing body must state that the information discussed at the executive session is not to be made public by the media.
- No executive session may be held for the purpose of taking final action or making any final decision.