The basic requirement of the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) is that meetings of governing bodies be open and public. Use these practice tips to guide your agency’s OPMA compliance.* For more information and resources visit www.mrsc.org/opmapra.

Basic Requirements

- **All meetings open and public.** All meetings of governing bodies of public agencies must be open to the public, except for certain exceptions outlined in the OPMA. RCW 42.30.030.
- **Quorum.** Generally, a meeting occurs when a quorum (majority) of the governing body is in attendance and action is taken, which includes discussion or deliberation as well as voting. RCW 42.30.020(2) & (3).
- **Attendees.** All persons must be permitted to attend and attendees cannot be required to register their names or other information as a condition of attendance. Disruptive and disorderly attendees may be removed. RCW 42.30.040 & 050.
- **No secret ballots.** Votes may not be taken by secret ballot. RCW 42.30.060(2).
- **Adoption of ordinances.** Ordinances, resolutions, rules, regulations, and orders must be adopted at a public meeting or they are invalid. RCW 42.30.060(1).

Position in Agency | Required to Comply
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Member of a governing body | Yes
- City or Town Councilmember or Mayor
- County Commissioner or County Councilmember
- Special Purpose District Commissioner/Board Member

Member of a subagency created by ordinance or legislative act, e.g.: | Yes
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- Planning Commission
- Library Board
- Parks Board
- Civil Service Commission

Member of a committee | Yes
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- Committees that act on behalf of (exercise actual or de facto decision-making authority for) the governing body, conduct hearings, or take testimony or public comment
- Committees that are purely advisory

Agency staff | No
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Penalties for Noncompliance

- **Actions null and void.** Any action taken at a meeting which fails to comply with the provisions of the OPMA is null and void. RCW 42.30.060(1).
- **Personal liability.** Potential personal liability of $500 for any member of a governing body who attends a meeting knowing that it violates the OPMA and $1,000 for any subsequent OPMA violation. RCW 42.30.120(1)(2).
- **Agency liability.** Any person who prevails against an agency in any action in the courts for a violation of the OPMA will be awarded all costs, including attorney fees, incurred in connection with such legal action. RCW 42.30.120(2).

OPMA Training Requirements

- Every member of a governing body of a public agency must complete training requirements on the OPMA within 90 days of assuming office or taking the oath of office. RCW 42.30.205(1).
- In addition, every member of a governing body must complete training at intervals of no more than four years as long as they remain in office. RCW 42.30.205(2).

*DISCLAIMER: These practice tips are meant to provide summary information on basic agency obligations of the OPMA; the practice tips are not intended to be regarded as specific legal advice. Consult with your agency’s legal counsel about this topic as well.

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