

Open Meeting Act of 1976

P.A. 267 of 1976

As amended through 2016

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OPEN MEETINGS ACT

Act 267 of 1976

AN ACT to require certain meetings of certain public bodies to be open to the public; to require notice and the keeping of minutes of meetings; to provide for enforcement; to provide for invalidation of governmental decisions under certain circumstances; to provide penalties; and to repeal certain acts and parts of acts.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 .

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

15.261 Short title; effect of act on certain charter provisions, ordinances, or resolutions. [M.S.A. 4.1800(11)]

Sec. 1.

- (1) This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Open meetings act”.
- (2) This act shall supersede all local charter provisions, ordinances, or resolutions which relate to requirements for meetings of local public bodies to be open to the public.
- (3) After the effective date of this act, nothing in this act shall prohibit a public body from adopting an ordinance, resolution, rule, or charter provision which would require a greater degree of openness relative to meetings of public bodies than the standards provided for in this act.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 .

15.262 Definitions. [M.S.A. 4.1800(12)]

Sec. 2. As used in this act:

- (a) “Public body” means any state or local legislative or governing body, including a board, commission, committee, subcommittee, authority, or council, which is empowered by state constitution, statute, charter, ordinance, resolution, or rule to exercise governmental or proprietary authority or perform a governmental or proprietary function, or a lessee thereof performing an essential public purpose and function pursuant to the lease agreement.
- (b) “Meeting” means the convening of a public body at which a quorum is present for the purpose of deliberating toward or rendering a decision on a public policy.
- (c) “Closed session” means a meeting or part of a meeting of a public body which is closed to the public.
- (d) “Decision” means a determination, action, vote, or disposition upon a motion, proposal, recommendation, resolution, order, ordinance, bill, or measure on which a vote by members of a public body is required and by which a public body effectuates or formulates public policy.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 .

15.263 Meetings, decisions, and deliberations of public body; requirements; attending or addressing meeting of public body; tape-recording, videotaping, broadcasting, and telecasting proceedings; rules and regulations; exclusion from meeting; exemptions.
[M.S.A. 4.1800(13)]

Sec. 3.

- (1) All meetings of a public body shall be open to the public and shall be held in a place available to the general public. All persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting except as otherwise provided in this act. The right of a person to attend a meeting of a public body includes the right to tape-record, to videotape, to broadcast live on radio, and to telecast live on television the proceedings of a public body at a public meeting. The exercise of this right shall not be dependent upon the prior approval of the public body. However, a public body may establish reasonable rules and regulations in order to minimize the possibility of disrupting the meeting.
- (2) All decisions of a public body shall be made at a meeting open to the public.
- (3) All deliberations of a public body constituting a quorum of its members shall take place at a meeting open to the public except as provided in this section and sections 7 and 8.
- (4) A person shall not be required as a condition of attendance at a meeting of a public body to register or otherwise provide his or her name or other information or otherwise to fulfill a condition precedent to attendance.
- (5) A person shall be permitted to address a meeting of a public body under rules established and recorded by the public body. The legislature or a house of the legislature may provide by rule that the right to address may be limited to prescribed times at hearings and committee meetings only.
- (6) A person shall not be excluded from a meeting otherwise open to the public except for a breach of the peace actually committed at the meeting.
- (7) This act does not apply to the following public bodies but only when deliberating the merits of a case:
 - (a) The Michigan compensation appellate commission operating as described in either of the following:
 - (i) Section 274 of the worker's disability compensation act of 1969, 1969 PA 317, MCL 418.274
 - (ii) Section 34 of the the Michigan employment security act, 1936 (Ex Sess) PA 1, [MCL] 421.34.
 - (b) The state tenure commission created in section 1 of Article VII of 1937 (Ex Sess) PA 4, MCL 38.131, when acting as a board of review from the decision of a controlling board.
 - (c) The Employment relations commission or an arbitrator or arbitration panel created or appointed under 1939 PA 176, MCL 423.1 to 423.30.
 - (d) The Michigan public service commission created under 1939 PA 3, MCL 460.1 to 460.11.
- (8) This act does not apply to an association of insurers created under the insurance code of 1956, Act No. 218 of the Public Acts of 1956, 1956 PA 218, MCL 500.100 TO 500.8302,

or other association or facility formed under that act as a nonprofit organization of insurer members.

- (9) This act does not apply to a committee of a public body that adopts a nonpolicymaking resolution of tribute or memorial which resolution is not adopted at a meeting.
- (10) This act does not apply to a meeting that is a social or chance gathering or conference not designed to avoid this act.
- (11) This act does not apply to the Michigan veterans' trust fund board of trustees or a county or district committee created under 1946 (1st Ex Sess) PA 9, MCL 35.602 to 35.610, when the board of trustees or county or district committee is deliberating the merits of an emergent need. A decision of the board of trustees or county or district committee made under this subsection shall be reconsidered by the board or committee at its next regular or special meeting consistent with the requirements of this act. "Emergent need" means a situation that the board of trustees, by rules promulgated under the administrative procedures act of 1969, 1969 PA 306, MCL 24.201 to 24.328, determines requires immediate action.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 ;--Am. 1981, Act 161, Imd. Eff. Nov. 30, 1981 ;--Am. 1986, Act 269, Imd. Eff. Dec. 19, 1986 ;--Am. 1988, Act 158, Imd. Eff. June 14, 1988 ;--Am. 1988, Act 278, Imd. Eff. July 27, 1988 ; Am. 2016, Act 504, Eff. Mar 10, 2017 (Brackets added) .

Admin Rule: R 35.621 of the Michigan Administrative Code.

15.264 Public notice of meetings generally; contents; places of posting. [M.S.A. 4.1800(14)]

Sec. 4. The following provisions shall apply with respect to public notice of meetings:

- (a) A public notice shall always contain the name of the public body to which the notice applies, its telephone number if one exists, and its address.
- (b) A public notice for a public body shall always be posted at its principal office and any other locations considered appropriate by the public body. Cable television may also be utilized for purposes of posting public notice.
- (c) If a public body is a part of a state department, part of the legislative or judicial branch of state government, part of an institution of higher education, or part of a political subdivision or school district, a public notice shall also be posted in the respective principal office of the state department, the institution of higher education, clerk of the house of representatives, secretary of the state senate, clerk of the supreme court, or political subdivision or school district.
- (d) If a public body does not have a principal office, the required public notice for a local public body shall be posted in the office of the county clerk in which the public body serves and the required public notice for a state public body shall be posted in the office of the secretary of state.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 ;--Am. 1984, Act 87, Imd. Eff. Apr. 19, 1984 .

15.265 Public notice of regular meetings, change in schedule of regular meetings, rescheduled regular meetings, or special meetings; time for posting; statement of date, time, and place; applicability of subsection (4); recess or adjournment; emergency sessions; meeting in residential dwelling; notice. [M.S.A. 4.1800(15)]

Sec. 5.

- (1) A meeting of a public body shall not be held unless public notice is given as provided in this section by a person designated by the public body.
- (2) For regular meetings of a public body, there shall be posted within 10 days after the first meeting of the public body in each calendar or fiscal year a public notice stating the dates, times, and places of its regular meetings.
- (3) If there is a change in the schedule of regular meetings of a public body, there shall be posted within 3 days after the meeting at which the change is made, a public notice stating the new dates, times, and places of its regular meetings.
- (4) Except as provided in this subsection or in subsection (6), for a rescheduled regular or a special meeting of a public body, a public notice stating the date, time, and place of the meeting shall be posted at least 18 hours before the meeting in a prominent and conspicuous place at both the public body's principal office and, if the public body directly or indirectly maintains an official internet presence that includes monthly or more frequent updates of public meeting agendas or minutes, on a portion of the website that is fully accessible to the public. The public notice on the website shall be included on either the homepage or on a separate webpage dedicated to public notices for nonregularly scheduled public meetings and accessible via a prominent and conspicuous link on the website's homepage that clearly describes its purpose for public notification of those nonregularly scheduled public meetings. The requirement of 18-hour notice does not apply to special meetings of subcommittees of a public body or conference committees of the state legislature. A conference committee shall give a 6-hour notice. A second conference committee shall give a 1-hour notice. Notice of a conference committee meeting shall include written notice to each member of the conference committee and the majority and minority leader of each house indicating time and place of the meeting.
- (5) A meeting of a public body that is recessed for more than 36 hours shall be reconvened only after public notice that is equivalent to that required under subsection (4) has been posted. If either house of the state legislature is adjourned or recessed for less than 18 hours, the notice provisions of subsection (4) are not applicable. Nothing in this section bars a public body from meeting in emergency session in the event of a severe and imminent threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the public when 2/3 of the members serving on the body decide that delay would be detrimental to efforts to lessen or respond to the threat. However, if a public body holds an emergency public meeting that does not comply with the 18-hour posted notice requirement, it shall make paper copies of the public notice for the emergency meeting available to the public at that meeting. The notice shall include an explanation of the reasons that the public body cannot comply with the 18-hour posted notice requirement. The explanation shall be specific to the circumstances that necessitated the emergency public meeting, and the use of generalized

explanations such as “an imminent threat to the health of the public” or “a danger to public welfare and safety” does not meet the explanation requirements of this subsection. If the public body directly or indirectly maintains an official internet presence that includes monthly or more frequent updates of public meeting agendas or minutes, it shall post the public notice of the emergency meeting and its explanation on its website in the manner described for an internet posting in subsection (4). Within 48 hours after the emergency public meeting, the public body shall send official correspondence to the board of county commissioners of the county in which the public body is principally located, informing the commission that an emergency public meeting with less than 18 hours’ public notice has taken place. The correspondence shall also include the public notice of the meeting with explanation and shall be sent by either the United States postal service or electronic mail. Compliance with the notice requirements for emergency meetings in this subsection does not create, and shall not be construed to create, a legal basis or defense for failure to comply with other provisions of this act and does not relieve the public body from the duty to comply with any provision of this act.

- (6) A meeting of a public body may only take place in a residential dwelling if a nonresidential building within the boundary of the local governmental unit or school system is not available without cost to the public body. For a meeting of a public body that is held in a residential dwelling, notice of the meeting shall be published as a display advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation in the city or township in which the meeting is to be held. The notice shall be published not less than 2 days before the day on which the meeting is held, and shall state the date, time, and place of the meeting. The notice shall be at the bottom of the display advertisement, set off in a conspicuous manner, and include the following language: “This meeting is open to all members of the public under Michigan’s open meetings act”.
- (7) A durational requirement for posting a public notice of a meeting under this act is the time that the notice is required to be accessible to the public.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 ;--Am. 1978, Act 256, Imd. Eff. June 21, 1978 ;--Am. 1982, Act 134, Imd. Eff. Apr. 22, 1982 ;--Am. 1984, Act 167, Imd. Eff. June 29, 1984;-- Am. 2012, Act 528, Imd. Eff. Dec. 28, 2012.

15.266 Providing copies of public notice on written request; fee. [M.S.A. 4.1800(16)]

Sec. 6.

- (1) Upon the written request of an individual, organization, firm, or corporation, and upon the requesting party's payment of a yearly fee of not more than the reasonable estimated cost for printing and postage of such notices, a public body shall send to the requesting party by first class mail a copy of any notice required to be posted pursuant to section 5(2) to (5).
- (2) Upon written request, a public body, at the same time a public notice of a meeting is posted pursuant to section 5, shall provide a copy of the public notice of that meeting to any newspaper published in the state and to any radio and television station located in the state, free of charge.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 .

15.267 Closed sessions; roll call vote; separate set of minutes. [M.S.A. 4.1800(17)]

Sec. 7.

- (1) A 2/3 roll call vote of members elected or appointed and serving is required to call a closed session, except for the closed sessions permitted under section 8(a), (b), (c), (g), (i), and (j). The roll call vote and the purpose or purposes for calling the closed session shall be entered into the minutes of the meeting at which the vote is taken.
- (2) A separate set of minutes shall be taken by the clerk or the designated secretary of the public body at the closed session. These minutes shall be retained by the clerk of the public body, are not available to the public, and shall only be disclosed if required by a civil action filed under section 10, 11, or 13. These minutes may be destroyed 1 year and 1 day after approval of the minutes of the regular meeting at which the closed session was approved.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 ;--Am. 1993, Act 81, Eff. Apr. 1, 1994 ;--Am. 1996, Act 464, Imd. Eff. Dec. 26, 1996 .

15.268 Closed sessions; permissible purposes. [M.S.A. 4.1800(18)]

Sec. 8. A public body may meet in a closed session only for the following purposes:

- (a) To consider the dismissal, suspension, or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, or to consider a periodic personnel evaluation of, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent, if the named person requests a closed hearing. A person requesting a closed hearing may rescind the request at any time, in which case the matter at issue shall be considered after the rescission only in open sessions.
- (b) To consider the dismissal, suspension, or disciplining of a student if the public body is part of the school district, intermediate school district, or institution of higher education that the student is attending, and if the student or the student's parent or guardian requests a closed hearing.
- (c) For strategy and negotiation sessions connected with the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement if either negotiating party requests a closed hearing.
- (d) To consider the purchase or lease of real property up to the time an option to purchase or lease that real property is obtained.
- (e) To consult with its attorney regarding trial or settlement strategy in connection with specific pending litigation, but only if an open meeting would have a detrimental financial effect on the litigating or settlement position of the public body.
- (f) To review and consider the contents of an application for employment or appointment to a public office if the candidate requests that the application remain confidential. However, except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, all interviews by a public body for employment or appointment to a public office shall be held in an open meeting pursuant to this act. This subdivision does not apply to a public office described in subdivision (j).

- (g) Partisan caucuses of members of the state legislature.
- (h) To consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state or federal statute.
- (i) For a compliance conference conducted by the department of commerce under section 16231 of the public health code, Act No. 368 of the Public Acts of 1978, being section 333.16231 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, before a complaint is issued.
- (j) In the process of searching for and selecting a president of an institution of higher education established under section 4, 5, or 6 of article VIII of the state constitution of 1963, to review the specific contents of an application, to conduct an interview with a candidate, or to discuss the specific qualifications of a candidate if the particular process of searching for and selecting a president of an institution of higher education meets all of the following requirements:
 - (i) The search committee in the process, appointed by the governing board, consists of at least 1 student of the institution, 1 faculty member of the institution, 1 administrator of the institution, 1 alumnus of the institution, and 1 representative of the general public. The search committee also may include 1 or more members of the governing board of the institution, but the number shall not constitute a quorum of the governing board. However, the search committee shall not be constituted in such a way that any 1 of the groups described in this subparagraph constitutes a majority of the search committee.
 - (ii) After the search committee recommends the 5 final candidates, the governing board does not take a vote on a final selection for the president until at least 30 days after the 5 final candidates have been publicly identified by the search committee.
 - (iii) The deliberations and vote of the governing board of the institution on selecting the president take place in an open session of the governing board.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 ;--Am. 1984, Act 202, Imd. Eff. July 3, 1984 ;--Am. 1993, Act 81, Eff. Apr. 1, 1994 ;--Am. 1996, Act 464, Imd. Eff. Dec. 26, 1996 .

15.269 Minutes generally. [M.S.A. 4.1800(19)]

Sec. 9.

- (1) Each public body shall keep minutes of each meeting showing the date, time, place, members present, members absent, any decisions made at a meeting open to the public, and the purpose or purposes for which a closed session is held. The minutes shall include all roll call votes taken at the meeting. Corrections in the minutes shall be made not later than the next meeting after the meeting to which the minutes refer. Corrected minutes shall be available no later than the next subsequent meeting after correction. The corrected minutes shall show both the original entry and the correction.

- (2) Minutes shall be public records open to public inspection and shall be available at the address designated on posted public notices pursuant to section 4. Copies of the minutes shall be available to the public at the reasonable estimated cost for printing and copying.
- (3) Proposed minutes shall be available for public inspection not more than 8 business days after the meeting to which the minutes refer. Approved minutes shall be available for public inspection not later than 5 business days after the meeting at which the minutes are approved by the public body.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 ;--Am. 1982, Act 130, Imd. Eff. Apr. 20, 1982 .

15.270 Decisions of public body; presumption; civil action to invalidate; jurisdiction; venue; reenactment of disputed decision. [M.S.A. 4.1800(20)]

Sec. 10.

- (1) Decisions of a public body shall be presumed to have been adopted in compliance with the requirements of this act. The attorney general, the prosecuting attorney of the county in which the public body serves, or any person may commence a civil action in the circuit court to challenge the validity of a decision of a public body made in violation of this act.
- (2) A decision made by a public body may be invalidated if the public body has not complied with the requirements of section 3(1), (2), and (3) in making the decision or if failure to give notice in accordance with section 5 has interfered with substantial compliance with section 3(1), (2), and (3) and the court finds that the noncompliance or failure has impaired the rights of the public under this act.
- (3) The circuit court shall not have jurisdiction to invalidate a decision of a public body for a violation of this act unless an action is commenced pursuant to this section within the following specified period of time:
 - (a) Within 60 days after the approved minutes are made available to the public by the public body except as otherwise provided in subdivision (b).
 - (b) If the decision involves the approval of contracts, the receipt or acceptance of bids, the making of assessments, the procedures pertaining to the issuance of bonds or other evidences of indebtedness, or the submission of a borrowing proposal to the electors, within 30 days after the approved minutes are made available to the public pursuant to that decision.
- (4) Venue for an action under this section shall be any county in which a local public body serves or, if the decision of a state public body is at issue, in Ingham county.
- (5) In any case where an action has been initiated to invalidate a decision of a public body on the ground that it was not taken in conformity with the requirements of this act, the public body may, without being deemed to make any admission contrary to its interest, reenact the disputed decision in conformity with this act. A decision reenacted in this manner shall be effective from the date of reenactment and shall not be declared invalid by reason of a deficiency in the procedure used for its initial enactment.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 .

15.271 Civil action to compel compliance or enjoin noncompliance; commencement; venue; security not required; commencement of action for mandamus; court costs and attorney fees. [M.S.A. 4.1800(21)]

Sec. 11.

- (1) If a public body is not complying with this act, the attorney general, prosecuting attorney of the county in which the public body serves, or a person may commence a civil action to compel compliance or to enjoin further noncompliance with this act.
- (2) An action for injunctive relief against a local public body shall be commenced in the circuit court, and venue is proper in any county in which the public body serves. An action for an injunction against a state public body shall be commenced in the circuit court and venue is proper in any county in which the public body has its principal office, or in Ingham county. If a person commences an action for injunctive relief, that person shall not be required to post security as a condition for obtaining a preliminary injunction or a temporary restraining order.
- (3) An action for mandamus against a public body under this act shall be commenced in the court of appeals.
- (4) If a public body is not complying with this act, and a person commences a civil action against the public body for injunctive relief to compel compliance or to enjoin further noncompliance with the act and succeeds in obtaining relief in the action, the person shall recover court costs and actual attorney fees for the action.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 .

15.272 Violation as misdemeanor; penalty. [M.S.A. 4.1800(22)]

Sec. 12.

- (1) A public official who intentionally violates this act is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than \$1,000.00.
- (2) A public official who is convicted of intentionally violating a provision of this act for a second time within the same term shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be fined not more than \$2,000.00, or imprisoned for not more than 1 year, or both.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 .

15.273 Violation; liability. [M.S.A. 4.1800(23)]

Sec. 13.

- (1) A public official who intentionally violates this act shall be personally liable in a civil action for actual and exemplary damages of not more than \$500.00 total, plus court costs and actual attorney fees to a person or group of persons bringing the action.
- (2) Not more than 1 action under this section shall be brought against a public official for a single meeting. An action under this section shall be commenced within 180 days after the date of the violation which gives rise to the cause of action.
- (3) An action for damages under this section may be joined with an action for injunctive or exemplary relief under section 11.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 .

15.273a Selection of president by governing board of higher education institution; violation; civil fine. [M.S.A. 4.1800(223a)]

Sec. 13a. If the governing board of an institution of higher education established under section 4, 5, or 6 of article VIII of the state constitution of 1963 violates this act with respect to the process of selecting a president of the institution at any time after the recommendation of final candidates to the governing board, as described in section 8(j) , the institution is responsible for the payment of a civil fine of not more than \$500,000.00. This civil fine is in addition to any other remedy or penalty under this act. To the extent possible, any payment of fines imposed under this section shall be paid from funds allocated by the institution of higher education to pay for the travel and expenses of the members of the governing board.

History: Add. 1996, Act 464, Imd. Eff. Dec. 26, 1996 .

15.274 Repeal of §§ 15.251 to 15.253. [M.S.A. 4.1800(24)]

Sec. 14. Act No. 261 of the Public Acts of 1968, being sections 15.251 to 15.253 of the Compiled Laws of 1970, is repealed.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 .

15.275 Effective date. [M.S.A. 4.1800(25)]

Sec. 15. This act shall take effect January 1, 1977.

History: 1976, Act 267, Eff. Mar. 31, 1977 .