

## **GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR OPEN MEETINGS**

The following are some general principles and guidance for complying with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

- A quorum is required for each a meeting. A majority of all members of a body, including ex officio members, is a quorum unless the Commission sets a higher requirement by its rules. A decision generally requires a majority of the voting members present in the quorum.
- The Commission cannot meet by telephone. Meetings must be in a location open to the public.
- Reasonable notice must be given of every meeting. Reasonable notice includes the date, time, location, and a copy of the agenda or a statement that a current copy of the agenda for the meeting can be viewed at the main business office of the public body.
- An agenda is required for every meeting. Members and the public can suggest agenda items to the Chair. Agendas may be modified up to twenty four hours before a meeting. Agendas items must adequately describe what will be discussed.
- At the beginning of every meeting, an announcement is made that the meeting is a public meeting and informing everyone present where a copy of the Open Meetings Act is posted in the meeting room.
- All documents used by the Commission at a meeting are public records. A copy of any document used must be available for the public at the meeting.
- Decisions by the Commission cannot be made prior to a meeting or in a closed session. Decisions must done by a vote at a meeting of the Commission. (Members cannot be contacted individually by other members to determine how they will vote prior to a meeting, to discuss agenda items to avoid an open discussion at a meeting, or to decide an action before a meeting.)
- Roll call votes are required and each member's vote must be recorded. Voting by secret ballot is permitted for choosing officers of the Commission. However, the total number of votes for each candidate must be recorded.
- Subcommittees can be used to assist in conducting the Commission's affairs. A subcommittee cannot be the whole Commission or a quorum of the Commission. A subcommittee can make a report to the Commission and provide alternatives as part of the report, but cannot make a recommendation as to how to proceed except at an open meeting of the Commission. The Commission must make all final decisions.
- Minutes are required for each meeting. Written minutes must be available for review by the public within 10 working days or before the next meeting whichever is earlier. The minutes must include the time and place of the meeting, members present or absent, and the substance of all matters discussed.
- Minutes should include how each member voted on each item or if the member was absent or did not vote.
- The public has a right to attend any meeting without identifying themselves. The Commission cannot prevent the public from participating at all meetings. Individuals who want to speak at the meeting can be required to identify themselves.
- The Commission can make reasonable rules regarding the conduct of individuals attending meetings.