

## **FAQs for the Public and Media**

### **About Public Meeting Notices Filed with the Secretary of State**

**NOTE:** In these FAQs, we use “agency” to refer to all the different kinds of agencies, advisory committees, boards, etc., which are covered by the definition of “public body” in the Open Meetings Law. Click [here](#) to read the Open Meetings Law.

#### **Who Has to File?**

1. [Who has to file meeting notices with you?](#)
2. [Is there a list of agencies that have to file meeting notices with you?](#)
3. [Does local government have to file their meeting notices with you?](#)
4. [Who decides if an agency has to file a regular meeting notice with you?](#)
5. [Do agencies file notices of special meetings with you?](#)
6. [Do agencies have to have regular meeting schedules?](#)

#### **If Meeting Notices Aren't Filed**

6. [I know an agency that isn't filing meeting notices with you. Can you make them file?](#)
7. [What are the penalties for not filing a meeting notice with you?](#)

#### **The Secretary of State's Electronic Calendar**

8. [Does your electronic calendar include all of the agencies that have to file meeting notices with you?](#)
9. [I looked up a meeting in your e-calendar. It doesn't include information I'm looking for. Why not?](#)
10. [Why do I have to look in two places on your website to be sure I find the information about a meeting?](#)

#### **Miscellaneous**

11. [Where can I get more information about what the law requires with regard to public meetings?](#)

#### **Who Has to File?**

##### **1. Who has to file meeting notices with you?**

The Open Meetings Law defines “public body”. The law says that public bodies that are part of State government have to file a schedule of regular meetings with us. Click [here](#) to read the Open Meetings Law.

[Return to top](#)

##### **2. Is there a list of agencies that have to file meeting notices with you?**

No, there is not a list. The reason is that the definition of “public body” is very broad. Click [here](#) to read the Open Meetings Law.

[Return to top](#)

##### **3. Does local government have to file their meeting notices with you?**

No, the law has other requirements for local governments. Click [here](#) to read the Open Meetings Law.

[Return to top](#)

#### **4. Who decides if an agency has to file regular meeting notices with you?**

The individual agencies decide. They may consult their attorney or the Attorney General to help decide if notices have to be filed with us. For more information, you may find the Attorney General's FAQs and Guide to Open Government helpful. Click [here](#) to go to the Attorney General's website.

[Return to top](#)

#### **5. Do agencies file notices of special meetings with you?**

Some agencies choose to file notices of special or called meetings or public hearings with us.

[Return to top](#)

#### **6. Do agencies have to have regular meeting schedules?**

We don't have the authority to interpret the Open Meetings Act, so we can't answer that question. For more information, you may find the Attorney General's FAQs and Guide to Open Government helpful. Click [here](#) to go to the Attorney General's website.

[Return to top](#)

### **If Meeting Notices Aren't Filed**

#### **6. I know an agency that isn't filing meeting notices with you. Can you make them file?**

No, we don't have the authority to make an agency file regular meeting notices. You may want to contact the agency directly. You may also want to consult with an attorney.

[Return to top](#)

#### **7. What are the penalties for not filing a meeting notice with you?**

We don't have the authority to penalize an agency for not filing a meeting notice with us. For information on penalties read the Open Meetings Act (click [here](#)). You may also find the Attorney General's FAQs and Guide to Open Government helpful. Click [here](#) to go to the Attorney General's website.

[Return to top](#)

### **The Secretary of State's Electronic Calendar**

#### **8. Does your electronic calendar include all of the agencies that have to file meeting notices with you?**

We don't know. We set up the electronic calendar to include all of the agencies that filed meeting notices with us in calendar year 2014/2015. There may be other agencies that didn't file notices during that time for some reason. For example, an agency may not have had a public meeting and so may not have filed a meeting notice. In addition, new agencies are often created by the General Assembly or by agencies themselves. For example, a principal department head might decide to create an advisory committee which would then need to file notices.

[Return to top](#)

**9. I looked up a meeting in your e-calendar. It doesn't include information I'm looking for. Why not?**

Agencies are only required to enter the information required by the Open Meetings Act. Click [here](#) to read the Open Meetings Law. Our e-calendar has space for agencies to enter optional information but we can't make them do that. There should be contact information for every meeting so you can call or email and ask questions about the meeting. **DO NOT call or email the Secretary of State's office to ask questions about a meeting.** We will not know the answers. The only information we have about meetings is what you see on our website.

[Return to top](#)

**10. Why do I have to look in two places on your website to be sure I find the information about a meeting?**

There are 2 places on the website with meeting notice information: the E-Calendar (click [here](#)) and the legacy meeting notice site (click [here](#)). Some agencies filed meeting notices for this year before the E-Calendar was on our website. We don't have the staff to be able to go back and add the information about those meetings to our E-Calendar.

[Return to top](#)

**11. Where can I get more information about what the law requires with regard to public meetings?**

You can get more information about the Open Meetings Law from many different sources. For example, you can get information from the Attorney General's website. Click [here](#) to go to that website.

There are websites outside of State government which are also possible sources for information about the Open Meetings Law. Please note that the websites listed below are not part of the Secretary of State's office. We offer this information in an effort to be helpful.

\* *Public Records Law for North Carolina Local Governments* by David Lawrence, is a book published by the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Although the book mainly deals with Public Records Law and local government, it includes some information about State government and open meetings. Click [here](#) to go to the School of Government website.

\* The School of Government also has a blog, *Coates Canons*, which includes postings about the Open Meetings Law. Click [here](#) to go to the blog.

\* Some nonprofit organizations post information about the Open Meetings Law. For example, Elon University has a Sunshine Center where some information about the Open Meetings Law is posted. Click [here](#) to go to their website.

[Return to top](#)