

## FAQs for Government About Filing Public Meeting Notices with the Secretary of State

Here are answers to questions we receive frequently about filing notices of regular public meetings with the Secretary of State. We provide this for informational purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice.

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

### **Do we have to file?**

1. [Is there a list of agencies which have to file meeting notices with you?](#)
2. [Does my agency have to file a regular public meeting notice with you?](#)
3. [We post our meeting notices on our website. Why do we have to send them to you?](#)
4. [We're a local government agency. Do we have to file meeting notices with your office?](#)

### **What do we have to file?**

5. [We've changed our regular meeting schedule. Do we have to file a new notice with you?](#)
6. [Is there a list of information I have to include in my notice of regular meetings?](#)
7. [Can we file notices of special meetings with you?](#)

### **How do we file?**

8. [What are the advantages of e-filing our Calendar notices of meetings?](#)
9. [Do we have to use your e-filing system and file online?](#)
10. [I want to e-file our meeting notices. How do I do that?](#)
11. [Can I set up recurring meetings on the electronic Calendar?](#)
12. [My agency has created some new committees. I have to file meeting notices for those committees. Can I do that on line?](#)
13. [Is there a form I can use to file the public meeting schedules with your office?](#)
14. [How soon will you post my notice after I send it to you?](#)

### **Miscellaneous**

15. [Who can I contact if I have questions?](#)
16. [Where can I get more information about the Open Meetings Law?](#)

### **Do we have to file?**

1. **Is there a list of agencies which have to file meeting schedules with you?**

No, there isn't a list of agencies which have to file.

[Return to top](#)

2. **Does my agency have to file regular meeting notices with you?**

We can't answer that question for you. The answer may be different for different public agencies. Here are some of the things you can do to figure out if you need to file regular public meeting notices with us:

- \* Look at the definitions of "public body" and "official meeting". Click [here](#) for the definitions. Decide if your agency and its meetings fall within the definition.
- \* Look at the law, rule, Executive Order or other legal document that created your public agency. Many laws and other legal documents that create agencies include a reference to the Open Meetings Act. Your public agency may have a law which says it must hold a certain number of meetings in a certain time frame. Those meetings may be regularly scheduled meetings for which you would need to file public meeting notices.
- \* Ask your attorney. If your agency does not have an attorney, ask the Attorney General for help. Click [here](#) for contact information for the Attorney General's Office.
- \* If your agency is governed by an appointed body like a board or commission, ask the person/people who appoint the members of your board or commission.

[Return to top](#)

### **3. We post our meeting notices on our website. Why do we have to send them to you?**

The short answer is that the law requires you to send them to us. Click [here](#) to read the Open Meetings Law. We can't tell you exactly why the General Assembly said you have to file with us. One possibility is that people sometimes have trouble knowing where to look for government agencies on the Internet but know about the Secretary of State's office.

[Return to top](#)

### **4. We're a local government agency. Do we have to file public meeting notices with your office?**

Not as far as we know. However, if you want to file a meeting notice with us, we will accept it.

[Return to top](#)

### **What do we have to file?**

### **5. We've changed our regular meeting schedule. . Do we have to file a new notice with you?**

Yes, you should file the new schedule with us at least 7 days before the first meeting under the changed schedule. Click [here](#) to read the law.

[Return to top](#)

### **6. Is there a list of information I have to include in my notice of regular meetings?**

We suggest you think about it like an invitation. What do you need to know to decide if you're going to accept an invitation? That's the kind of information you may want to include in your public meeting notices. To help you, we've provided a table showing the parallels between an invitation and a public meeting notice.

If you use our electronic calendar and e-file, it works like an e-form. There are mandatory items you have to fill in, marked with an asterisk. There's also space for optional information. **PLEASE NOTE:** There's an optional information space for contact information if someone has questions about the meeting. If you don't put anything in that blank, it will enter your contact information as a default. That's because people need to know who to call or email if they have questions about a meeting.

<b>An Invitation to an Event:</b>	<b>Suggestions for A Public Meeting Notice:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <small>HELP</small> Who's putting the event on?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What's the name of the public agency holding the meeting?
<input type="checkbox"/> <small>HELP</small> When is the event? (Date, maybe day of the week)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When is the meeting? (Date, maybe day of the week)
<input type="checkbox"/> <small>HELP</small> What time does it start? And, maybe, end?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What time does the meeting start? And, maybe, end (if you know)?
<input type="checkbox"/> <small>HELP</small> Where is it going to take place?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Where is the meeting going to take place? What's the address? Room number? Building name?
<input type="checkbox"/> <small>HELP</small> What kind of event is it going to be?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What kind of meeting is it going to be? For example, is it a special meeting or a public hearing?
<input type="checkbox"/> <small>HELP</small> How do you RSVP?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> How can the public get more information? Who should they call or email? What website should they visit?
<input type="checkbox"/> <small>HELP</small> Do you need to bring something (like a gift)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is there an opportunity for public comments? Are there restrictions, e.g., comments limited to 5 minutes.
<input type="checkbox"/> <small>HELP</small> Are there any special requests (like letting them know if you need a vegetarian meal)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Does the public need to let you know if they want to speak? How do they do that?
<input type="checkbox"/> <small>HELP</small> Are there special arrangements?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> What else does the public need to know? * Will there be a closed session? * If it's a public tele-meeting, how can the public listen in? * How can they get a copy of the agenda? * Do they need a parking pass – how do they get one?

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](#)

## 7. Can we file notices of special meetings with you?

Yes. We'll accept any meeting notices you want to file with us including:

- \* Special or called meeting notices
- \* Public hearing notices

[Return to top](#)

## How do we File?

## **8. What are the advantages of e-filing our Calendar notices of meetings?**

1. You control not only what gets posted on line but when it gets posted.
2. You'll be able to add or edit meetings on line at any time of day or night (which may help with meeting deadlines).
3. Your meeting notices will be quickly posted online.
4. Your meeting notices will be searchable by clicking on a calendar, by entering dates, locations or your agency's name.
5. You can send a link to the calendar and meeting notice out to people interested in your meetings.
6. You provide better customer service to citizens and interested parties.

[Return to top](#)

## **9. Do we have to use your e-filing system and file online?**

Yes, the old way of posting meetings is no longer available.

[Return to top](#)

## **10. I want to e-file our meeting notices. How do I do that?**

1. Check to see if your agency already has been set up in our system. If not, follow the steps to "request a new entity".
2. Request an account for yourself (if you don't already have one).
3. After both you and your agency have accounts, you can begin to add meeting notices to the Calendar.

Click [here](#) for the e-calendar website.

[Return to top](#)

## **11. Can I set up recurring meetings on the electronic Calendar?**

Yes, you can set up recurring meetings. You can even set up recurring meetings with some different elements. For example, if all meetings except November and December are on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday, you can do that. First, create the recurring meetings. Then go back in and edit the November and December meetings to change the date.

For instructions on how to set up recurring meetings on the Calendar, click [here](#).

[Return to top](#)

**12. My agency has created some new committees. I have to file meeting notices for those committees. Can I do that on line?**

Yes, you can do that. There are two different ways to approach e-filing those committee meeting notices:

- \* You can set up each committee's meeting under your agency. Create the meeting the same way you would an agency meeting. Name the meeting with the committee's name. We recommend that you consider trying this method.

- \* You can set up the committee as a new entity and then create the meeting for it.

For instructions on setting up accounts and posting meeting notices on the Calendar, click [here](#).

[Return to top](#)

**13. Is there a form I can use to file the public meeting schedules with your office?**

No, we do not have a form for filing paper, email or fax meeting notices.

[Return to top](#)

#### 14. How soon will you post my notice after I send it to you?

E-filed meeting notices are posted as soon as they are approved by a Master User/Administrator.

[Return to top](#)

### Miscellaneous

#### 15. Who can I contact if I have questions?

For Questions About Filing Your Schedule With Us, Contact:	For Questions About Whether To File And What To File, Contact:
<a href="mailto:Calendar@sosnc.com">Calendar@sosnc.com</a> Certification & Filing Division 919-807-2219	* Your agency attorney * The Attorney General – click <a href="#">here</a> . * Your public information officer.

[Return to top](#)

#### 16. Where can I get more information about the NC Open Meetings Law?

You can get more information about the Open Meetings Law from several different sources. For example, you can get information from:

- \* Your attorney or the attorney in the Attorney General's Office who represents you.
- \* The Attorney General's website. Click [here](#) to go to that website.

The following non-State government websites are also possible sources for information about the Open Meetings Law:

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

\* The School of Government also has a blog, *Coates Canons*, which includes postings about the Open Meetings Law geared toward assisting local governments. It also includes information about State government and open meetings. 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](#)