

## Executive Order Loosens Open Meeting Law Requirements During Coronavirus Emergency

March 13, 2020 | Marc L. Terry | Articles

Governor Baker signed an Executive Order relieving government boards and committees from compliance with certain Open Meeting Law requirements during the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency.

[The Order](#) gives public bodies greater leeway to hold closed-door and remote meetings, so that government agencies may conduct business while also complying with public health recommendations regarding social distancing.

Under the Order:

- Public bodies may hold meetings without providing physical public access so long as the public has access to deliberations through alternative means.
- Alternative means include telephone or video conferencing and other methods of providing real-time public access to government meetings.
- When public participation at a meeting is required by law (such as a public hearing), the alternative means of public access must allow for active, real-time participation (such as an open conference call or live stream video with a comment option).
- Public bodies may allow for remote participation in meetings by all members, including the chair, with no members being physically present at the meeting location.

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- All other provisions of the Open Meeting Law remain in effect (posting meeting notices, recording and approving meeting minutes, executive session requirements, etc.).

The Order is effective immediately and remains in effect until rescinded or until the Governor's State of Emergency is terminated.

Please contact one of our attorneys with any questions about the Executive Order.

Mirick O'Connell will continue to update clients about legal issues associated with the Coronavirus pandemic.