

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed  
Shown in **Yellow***

1 Sec. 1. 1 V.S.A. § 310 is amended to read:

2 § 310. DEFINITIONS

3 As used in this subchapter:

4 (1) “Deliberations” means weighing, examining, and discussing the  
5 reasons for and against an act or decision, but expressly excludes the taking of  
6 evidence and the arguments of parties.

7 (2) “Meeting” means a gathering of a quorum of the members of a  
8 public body for the purpose of discussing the business of the public body or for  
9 the purpose of taking action. “Meeting” shall not mean written  
10 correspondence or an electronic communication, including e-mail, telephone,  
11 or teleconferencing, between members of a public body for the purpose of  
12 scheduling a meeting, organizing an agenda, or distributing materials to  
13 discuss at a meeting, provided that such a written correspondence or such an  
14 electronic communication that results in written or recorded information shall  
15 be available for inspection and copying under the Public Records Act as set  
16 forth in chapter 5, subchapter 3 of this title.

17 (3) “Public body” means any board, council, or commission of the ~~state~~  
18 State or one or more of its political subdivisions, any board, council, or  
19 commission of any agency, authority, or instrumentality of the ~~state~~ State or  
20 one or more of its political subdivisions, or any committee of any of the  
21 foregoing boards, councils, or commissions, except that “public body” does not

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed  
Shown in **Yellow***

1 include councils or similar groups established by the ~~governor~~ Governor for  
2 the sole purpose of advising the ~~governor~~ Governor with respect to policy.

3 (4) “Publicly announced” means that notice is given to an editor,  
4 publisher, or news director of a newspaper or radio station serving the area of  
5 the ~~state~~ State in which the public body has jurisdiction, and to any ~~editor,~~  
6 ~~publisher or news director~~ person who has requested under subdivision  
7 312(c)(5) of this title to be notified of special meetings.

8 (5) “Quasi-judicial proceeding” means a proceeding which is:

9 (A) a contested case under the Vermont Administrative Procedure  
10 Act; or

11 (B) a case in which the legal rights of one or more persons who are  
12 granted party status are adjudicated, which is conducted in such a way that all  
13 parties have opportunity to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses  
14 presented by other parties, which results in a written decision, and the result of  
15 which is appealable by a party to a higher authority.

16 Sec. 2. 1 V.S.A. § 312 is amended to read:

17 § 312. RIGHT TO ATTEND MEETINGS OF PUBLIC AGENCIES

18 (a)(1) All meetings of a public body are declared to be open to the public at  
19 all times, except as provided in section 313 of this title. No resolution, rule,  
20 regulation, appointment, or formal action shall be considered binding except as  
21 taken or made at such open meeting, except as provided under ~~section~~

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed Shown in **Yellow***

1 subdivision 313(a)(2) of this title. ~~A meeting may be conducted by audio~~  
2 ~~conference or other electronic means, as long as the provisions of this~~  
3 ~~subchapter are met. A meeting of a public body is subject to the public~~  
4 ~~accommodation requirements of 9 V.S.A. chapter 139. A public body shall~~  
5 ~~electronically record by audio tape, all public hearings held to provide a forum~~  
6 ~~for public comment on a proposed rule, pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 840. The~~  
7 ~~public shall have access to copies of such tapes~~ electronic recordings as  
8 described in section 316 of this title.

9 (2) Participation in meetings through electronic or other means.

10 (A) As long as the requirements of this subchapter are met, one or  
11 more of the members of a public body may attend a regular, special, or  
12 emergency meeting by electronic or other means without being physically  
13 present at a designated meeting location.

14 (B) If one or more members attend a meeting by electronic or other  
15 means, such members may fully participate in discussing the business of the  
16 public body and voting to take an action, but any vote of the public body shall  
17 be taken by roll call.

18 (C) Each member who attends a meeting without being physically  
19 present at a designated meeting location shall:

20 (i) identify himself or herself when the meeting is convened; and

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed Shown in Yellow*

1                   (ii) be able to hear the conduct of the meeting and be heard  
2 throughout the meeting.

3                   (D) If a quorum or more of the members of a public body attend a  
4 meeting without being physically present at a designated meeting location, the  
5 following additional requirements shall be met:

6                   (i) At least 24 hours prior to the meeting, or as soon as practicable  
7 prior to an emergency meeting, the public body shall publicly announce the  
8 meeting, and a municipal public body shall post notice of the meeting in or  
9 near the municipal clerk's office and in at least two other designated public  
10 places in the municipality.

11                   (ii) The public announcement and posted notice of the meeting  
12 shall designate at least one physical location where a member of the public can  
13 attend and participate in the meeting. At least one member of the public body,  
14 or at least one staff or designee of the public body, shall be physically present  
15 at each designated meeting location.

16                   (b)(1) Minutes shall be taken of all meetings of public bodies. The minutes  
17 shall cover all topics and motions that arise at the meeting and give a true  
18 indication of the business of the meeting. Minutes shall include at least the  
19 following minimal information:

20                   (A) All members of the public body present;

21                   (B) All other active participants in the meeting;

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed Shown in Yellow*

1 (C) All motions, proposals, and resolutions made, offered, and  
2 considered, and what disposition is made of same; and

3 (D) The results of any votes, with a record of the individual vote of  
4 each member if a roll call is taken.

5 (2) Minutes of all public meetings shall be matters of public record,  
6 shall be kept by the clerk or secretary of the public body, and shall be available  
7 for inspection by any person and for purchase of copies at cost upon request  
8 after five days from the date of any meeting. Meeting minutes shall be posted  
9 no later than five days from the date of the meeting to a website, if one exists,  
10 that the public body maintains or has designated as the official website of the  
11 body.

12 (c)(1) The time and place of all regular meetings subject to this section  
13 shall be clearly designated by statute, charter, regulation, ordinance, bylaw,  
14 resolution, or other determining authority of the public body, and this  
15 information shall be available to any person upon request. The time and place  
16 of all public hearings and meetings scheduled by all Executive Branch State  
17 agencies, departments, boards, or commissions shall be available to the public  
18 as required under 3 V.S.A. § 2222(c).

19 (2) The time, place, and purpose of a special meeting subject to this  
20 section shall be publicly announced at least 24 hours before the meeting.  
21 Municipal public bodies shall post notices of special meetings in or near the

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed Shown in Yellow*

1 municipal clerk's office and in at least two other designated public places in  
2 the municipality, at least 24 hours before the meeting. In addition, notice shall  
3 be given, either orally or in writing, to each member of the public body at least  
4 24 hours before the meeting, except that a member may waive notice of a  
5 special meeting.

6 (3) Emergency meetings may be held without public announcement,  
7 without posting of notices and without 24-hour notice to members, provided  
8 some public notice thereof is given as soon as possible before any such  
9 meeting. Emergency meetings may be held only when necessary to respond to  
10 an unforeseen occurrence or condition requiring immediate attention by the  
11 public body.

12 (4) Any adjourned meeting shall be considered a new meeting, unless  
13 the time and place for the adjourned meeting is announced before the meeting  
14 adjourns.

15 (5) ~~An editor, publisher or news director of any newspaper, radio station~~  
16 ~~or television station serving the area of the state in which the public body has~~  
17 ~~jurisdiction~~ A person may request in writing that a public body notify the  
18 ~~editor, publisher or news director~~ person of special meetings of the public  
19 body. The request shall apply only to the calendar year in which it is made,  
20 unless made in December, in which case it shall apply also to the following  
21 year.

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed Shown in **Yellow***

1           (d)(1) ~~The~~ At least 48 hours prior to a regular meeting, and at least 24  
2 hours prior to a special meeting, a meeting agenda for a regular or special  
3 meeting shall be:

4                   (A) posted to a website, if one exists, that the public body maintains  
5 or designates as the official website of the body; and

6                   (B) in the case of a municipal public body, posted in or near the  
7 municipal office and in at least two other **designated** public places in the  
8 municipality.

9           (2) A meeting agenda shall be made available to ~~the news media or~~  
10 ~~concerned persons~~ a person prior to the meeting upon specific request.

11           (3)(A) Any addition to or deletion from the agenda shall be made as the  
12 first act of business at the meeting.

13                   (B) Any other adjustment to the agenda may be made at any time  
14 during the meeting.

15           (e) Nothing in this section or in section 313 of this title shall be construed  
16 as extending to the ~~judicial branch~~ Judicial Branch of the ~~government~~  
17 Government of Vermont or of any part of the same or to the ~~public service~~  
18 ~~board~~ Public Service Board; nor shall it extend to the deliberations of any  
19 public body in connection with a quasi-judicial proceeding; nor shall anything  
20 in this section be construed to require the making public of any proceedings,

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed  
Shown in **Yellow***

1 records, or acts which are specifically made confidential by the laws of the  
2 United States of America or of this ~~state~~ State.

3 (f) A written decision issued by a public body in connection with a  
4 quasi-judicial proceeding need not be adopted at an open meeting if the  
5 decision will be a public record.

6 (g) The provisions of this subchapter shall not apply to site inspections for  
7 the purpose of assessing damage or making tax assessments or abatements,  
8 clerical work, or work assignments of staff or other personnel. Routine,  
9 day-to-day administrative matters that do not require action by the public body,  
10 may be conducted outside a duly warned meeting, provided that no money is  
11 appropriated, expended, or encumbered.

12 (h) At an open meeting the public shall be given a reasonable opportunity  
13 to express its opinion on matters considered by the public body during the  
14 meeting as long as order is maintained. Public comment shall be subject to  
15 reasonable rules established by the chairperson. This subsection shall not  
16 apply to quasi-judicial proceedings.

17 (i) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the ~~parole board~~  
18 Parole Board from meeting at correctional facilities with attendance at the  
19 meeting subject to rules regarding access and security established by the  
20 superintendent of the facility.



*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed  
Shown in **Yellow***

1 Sec. 3. 1 V.S.A. § 313 is amended to read:

2 § 313. EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

3 (a) No public body ~~described in section 312 of this title~~ may hold an  
4 executive session from which the public is excluded, except by the affirmative  
5 vote of two-thirds of its members present in the case of any public body of  
6 State government or of a majority of its members present in the case of any  
7 public body of a municipality or other political subdivision. A motion to go  
8 into executive session shall indicate the nature of the business of the executive  
9 session, and no other matter may be considered in the executive session. Such  
10 vote shall be taken in the course of an open meeting and the result of the vote  
11 recorded in the minutes. No formal or binding action shall be taken in  
12 executive session except for actions relating to the securing of real estate  
13 options under subdivision (2) of this subsection. Minutes of an executive  
14 session need not be taken, but if they are, shall not be made public subject to  
15 subsection 312(b) of this title. A public body may not hold an executive  
16 session except to consider one or more of the following:

17 **(1)** ~~Contracts, labor relations agreements with employees, arbitration,~~  
18 ~~mediation, grievances, civil actions, or prosecutions by the state, where after~~  
19 ~~making a specific finding that premature general public knowledge would~~  
20 ~~clearly place the ~~state, municipality, other public body, or a person involved at~~~~  
21 a substantial disadvantage;

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed  
Shown in **Yellow***

1           (A) contracts;

2           (B) labor relations agreements with employees;

3           (C) arbitration or mediation;

4           (D) grievances, other than tax grievances;

5           (E) pending **or probable** civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the

6 public body is or may be a party;

7           **(F) confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose**

8 **of providing professional legal services to the body;**

9           (2) ~~The~~ the negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease  
10 options;

11           (3) ~~The~~ the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer  
12 or employee **other than the appointment of a person to a public body or to any**  
13 **elected office;**

14           (4) ~~A~~ a disciplinary or dismissal action against a public officer or  
15 employee; but nothing in this subsection shall be construed to impair the right  
16 of such officer or employee to a public hearing if formal charges are brought;

17           (5) ~~A~~ a clear and imminent peril to the public safety;

18           (6) ~~Discussion or consideration of records or documents excepted~~  
19 records exempt from the access to public records provisions of section ~~317~~ 316  
20 of this title. ~~Discussion or consideration of the excepted record or document;~~  
21 provided, however, that discussion of the exempt record shall not itself permit

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed  
Shown in **Yellow***

1 an extension of the executive session to the general subject to which the record  
2 ~~or document~~ pertains;

3 (7) ~~The~~ the academic records or suspension or discipline of students;

4 (8) ~~Testimony~~ testimony from a person in a parole proceeding  
5 conducted by the Parole Board if public disclosure of the identity of the person  
6 could result in physical or other harm to the person;

7 (9) ~~Information~~ information relating to a pharmaceutical rebate or to  
8 supplemental rebate agreements, which is protected from disclosure by federal  
9 law or the terms and conditions required by the Centers for Medicare and  
10 Medicaid Services as a condition of rebate authorization under the Medicaid  
11 program, considered pursuant to 33 V.S.A. §§ 1998(f)(2) and 2002(c);

12 (10) municipal or school security or emergency response measures, the  
13 disclosure of which could jeopardize public safety.

14 \* \* \*

15 Sec. 4. 1 V.S.A. § 314 is amended to read:

16 § 314. PENALTY AND ENFORCEMENT

17 (a) A person who is a member of a public body and who knowingly and  
18 intentionally violates the provisions of this subchapter, a person who  
19 knowingly and intentionally violates the provisions of this subchapter on  
20 behalf or at the behest of a public body, or a person who knowingly and  
21 intentionally participates in the wrongful exclusion of any person or persons

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed  
Shown in **Yellow***

1 from any meeting for which provision is herein made, shall be guilty of a  
2 misdemeanor and shall be fined not more than \$500.00.

3 (b)(1) ~~The attorney general~~ Prior to instituting an action under subsection  
4 (c) of this section, the Attorney General or any person aggrieved by a violation  
5 of the provisions of this subchapter shall provide the public body written notice  
6 that alleges a specific violation of this subchapter and requests a specific cure  
7 of such violation. The public body will not be liable for attorney's fees and  
8 litigation costs under subsection (d) of this section if it cures in fact a violation  
9 of this subchapter in accordance with the requirements of this subsection.

10 (2) Upon receipt of the written notice of alleged violation, the public  
11 body shall respond publicly to the alleged violation within seven business  
12 days by:

13 (A) acknowledging the violation of this subchapter and stating an  
14 intent to cure the violation within 14 calendar days; or

15 (B) stating that the public body has determined that no violation has  
16 occurred and that no cure is necessary.

17 (3) Failure of a public body to respond to a written notice of alleged  
18 violation within seven business days shall be treated as a denial of the violation  
19 for purposes of enforcement of the requirements of this subchapter.

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed  
Shown in **Yellow***

1           (4) Within 14 calendar days after a public body acknowledges a  
2           violation under subdivision (2)(A) of this subsection, the public body shall  
3           cure the violation at an open meeting by:

4                   (A) either ratifying, or declaring as void, any action taken at or  
5                   resulting from a meeting in violation of this subchapter; and

6                   (B) adopting specific measures that actually prevent future violations.

7           (c) **Following an acknowledgment or denial of a violation** and, if  
8           applicable, following expiration of the 14-calendar-day cure period for public  
9           bodies acknowledging a violation, the Attorney General or any person  
10           aggrieved by a violation of the provisions of this subchapter may apply to the  
11           superior court bring an action in the Civil Division of the Superior Court in the  
12           county in which the violation has taken place for appropriate injunctive relief  
13           or for a declaratory judgment. An action may be brought under this section no  
14           later than one year after the meeting at which the alleged violation occurred or  
15           to which the alleged violation relates. Except as to cases the court Court  
16           considers of greater importance, proceedings before the superior court Civil  
17           Division of the Superior Court, as authorized by this section and appeals  
18           therefrom, take precedence on the docket over all cases and shall be assigned  
19           for hearing and trial or for argument at the earliest practicable date and  
20           expedited in every way.

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed Shown in Yellow*

1        (d) The Court shall assess against a public body found to have violated the  
2        requirements of this subchapter reasonable attorney’s fees and other litigation  
3        costs reasonably incurred in any case under this subchapter in which the  
4        complainant has substantially prevailed, unless the Court finds that:

5            (1)(A) the public body had a reasonable basis in fact and law for its  
6        position; and

7            (B) the public body acted in good faith. In determining whether a  
8        public body acted in good faith, the Court shall consider, among other factors,  
9        whether the public body responded to a notice of an alleged violation of this  
10       subchapter in a timely manner under subsection (b) of this section; or

11           (2) the public body cured the violation in accordance with subsection (b)  
12       of this section.

13       **Sec. 5. 24 V.S.A. § 1964 is amended to read:**

14       **§ 1964. STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNITY JUSTICE BOARDS;**

15       **CONFIDENTIALITY OF CERTAIN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

16       **MEETINGS**

17       **(a) Each community justice center:**

18           **(1) Shall shall have an advisory board comprised of at least 51 percent**  
19       **citizen volunteers.;**

*H.497, Senate proposal of amendment: Differences from House as Passed Shown in Yellow*

1           (2) May ~~may~~ use a variety of community-based restorative justice  
2 approaches, including ~~community~~ restorative justice panels ~~or boards~~, group  
3 conferencing, or mediation; and

4           (3) ~~Shall~~ shall include programs to resolve disputes, address the needs of  
5 victims, address the wrongdoing of the offender, and promote the rehabilitation  
6 of youthful and adult offenders.

7           **(b)** Meetings of restorative justice panels and meetings to conduct  
8 restorative justice group conferencing or mediation shall not be subject to the  
9 Vermont Open Meeting Law, 1 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 2.

10 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATES

11           This act shall take effect on July 1, 2014. However, a person who violates  
12 1 V.S.A. § 312(b)(2) as amended by this act (requirement to post minutes to  
13 website, if any) shall not be subject to prosecution for such violation pursuant  
14 to 1 V.S.A. § 314(a) in connection with any meeting that occurs before July 1,  
15 2015.