

**S.55 Open Meeting Law Update**  
**Senator Ruth Hardy - March 19, 2024**

**Opening Meeting Law** – generally applies to all public bodies, except the PUC, and during deliberations in connection with quasi-judicial proceedings. The Judicial and Legislative branches have their own rules for opening meetings, which are similar to the Open Meeting Law.

**Public Body** – any state, municipal, school district, or regional government board, council, or commission, including committees and subcommittees of these entities.

**Non-Advisory Body** – any public body that **does** have supervision, control, or jurisdiction over legislative, quasi-judicial, tax, or budgetary matters.

**Advisory Body** – any public body that **does not** have supervision, control, or jurisdiction over legislative, quasi-judicial, tax, or budgetary matters.

**Meeting Modes by Type of Public Body**

Type of Public Body	Examples	Mode of Meeting
<b>State Level</b>		
Non-Advisory Body	Board of Education, Green Mountain Care Board, Natural Resources Board, Cannabis Control Board, etc	Must meet in hybrid mode; Record & post for 30 days
Advisory Body	Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee, Clean Water Board, Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council, etc.	in-person, remote, or hybrid
<b>Local/Regional Level</b>		
Non-Advisory Body	Selectboard, City Council, School Board, CUD Board, Development Review Board, etc.	In-person or hybrid (remote with physical location); <u>If feasible</u> , must record & post for 30 days
Advisory Body	Committees of non-advisory boards, regional emergency management committees, town parks & rec or energy committees, etc.	in-person, remote, or hybrid

**Request for Access to Meetings** – all meetings of public bodies must be open to the public, except during executive session. If an advisory body is meeting fully remotely or fully in-person, or a local non-advisory body is meeting fully in person, a resident member of the public, member of the public body, or member of the press may request in-person or basic electronic or telephonic access to the meeting. Exceptions for emergency & special meetings and field visits.

**State of Emergency or Local Incident** – all public bodies may meet fully in-person or fully remotely during a declared state of emergency or local incident, such as a power or internet outage, public safety threat, weather event or natural disaster, etc.

**Annual or Town Meetings** – these are not meetings of public bodies and often include voting, so many of the open meeting law provisions do not directly apply. S.55 extends the periods during which public hearings prior to annual meetings may be held and requires that such hearings & informational meetings be recorded and posted for public viewing.

**Working Group on Participation & Accessibility of Municipal Public Meetings & Elections** – chaired by Secretary of State, with multiple stakeholders. Report in November 2025 on best practices, technical assistance & training, accessibility & participation issues, remote voting at annual meeting, etc.