



Nuasin Next Generation'Guide to Open Meetings Law



Open Meetings Law

Nuasin Next Generation Charter School

2

Nuasin Next Generation Charter School Boards of Trustees are required to follow the Open Meetings Law allowing members of the public to have notice of, and attend and observe board meetings. The law provides certain provisions governing notice of such meetings to the public and specifics regarding the type of board activity that may be done out of public view. This guidance breaks down each component by applicable charter agreement provision(s), applicable laws and regulations, discussion, and responsible tasks. Responsible tasks include items the Board of Trustees and school leadership should include in annual compliance review.

If you have any questions regarding the information provided in this guidance please contact the Manager of Hr and Special Projects and/or Managing Director of Operations at 718-893-0640 or via email at Raymond.Johnson@nngcs.org or Melissa.Alston@nngcs.org respectively.

Table of Contents

- Applicable Charter Agreement Provision |3
- Open Meetings Law |3
- Applicable Laws and Regulations |3
- Responsible Tasks |8



OPEN MEETINGS LAW

A. Applicable Charter Agreement Provision The following images show the applicable provision from the Model Charter Agreement:

- Section 7.2, Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Laws.

7.2 Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Laws. The Education Corporation shall maintain and implement policies in order to ensure that it is in compliance with Articles Six (“FOIL”) and Seven (“Open Meetings Law”) of the New York Public Officers Law and all corresponding regulations.

(b) The Education Corporation Board shall: (1) promulgate an Open Meetings Law policy that is accessible to parents in each school; (ii) post notices and provide a media advisory in accordance with the Open Meetings Law regarding each Education Corporation Board meeting; and (iii) take and maintain minutes of all meetings and executive sessions of the Education Corporation Board and its committees, if any.

B. Applicable Laws and Regulations

- New York Education Law (“Education Law”) § 2854(1)(e)
- New York Public Officers Law (“Public Officers Law”) Article 6

C. Open Meetings Law Discussion

i. Meeting

The Open Meetings Law defines a “meeting” as a convening of a public body for the purpose of conducting public business. This would include all regularly scheduled, special and emergency board meetings. Yet, what about other convenings of the board? The most important aspect of determining whether a convening of the board is a “meeting” for which the requirements of the Open Meetings Law apply, is the purpose of the convening. The meeting must be for the purpose of conducting school-related business. This includes work sessions where a quorum of the board is present. Social gatherings and training are not considered meetings for these purposes as long as no more than passing reference to business occurs. For instance, if all of the board is present for a graduation



Open Meetings Law

Nuasin Next Generation Charter School

4

ceremony it is not a “meeting” of the board as the trustees’ attendance is not to conduct school business.

Board retreats may pose a mix of purposes. While many board retreats include aspects of board training, which would not be open to the public, strategic planning sessions are as strategic planning directly correlates to the business of the education corporation. Therefore, a portion of the day may not be open to the public but another portion would be and require the applicable notices.

ii. Notice

When the board determines it will hold a “meeting” to which the Open Meetings Law applies, the public must be provided appropriate notice. The notice requirements include the following:

- for meetings scheduled more than a week in advance, notice must be given no fewer than 72 hours prior to such meeting;
- for meetings scheduled less than a week in advance, notice must be given “to the extent practicable” at a “reasonable time prior” to the meeting ;
- provide date, time, and location of meeting ;
- be provided to the news media, which may be electronic;
- be posted in one or more designated public locations (usually the school(s)); and,
- be posted on the education corporation’s website. If board meetings are held in the same place and at the same time on a consistent basis, it is acceptable to post a yearly schedule at the beginning of the school year

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iii. Executive Session

Once a meeting is called into open session, the board may vote, by majority of the entire board, to go into an executive session, which is the portion of the meeting not open to the public. The Open Meetings Law limits the reasons why the board may enter into executive session, which are solely for:

- matters which will imperil the public safety if disclosed;
- any matter that may disclose the identity of a law enforcement agent or informer;



Open Meetings Law

Nuasin Next Generation Charter School

5

- any matter that may disclose the identity of a law enforcement agent or informer;
- information relating to current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense that would imperil effective law enforcement if disclosed;
- discussions involving proposed, pending, or current litigation;
- collective negotiations pursuant to Article 14 of the New York Civil Service Law;
- the medical, financial, credit, or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal, or removal of a particular person or corporation;
- the preparation, grading, or administration of exams; or,
- the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition, sale, or exchange of securities, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value. (Public Officers Law §§ 105(1)(a)-(h)).

The motion to go into executive session must identify the subject matter of the executive session with particularity. The board minutes should reflect this. Contrary to popular belief there is no authority to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing “personnel matters.” There needs to be further specificity of the personnel matter without stating the individual’s name. For instance, as opposed to saying “personnel matters,” the motion and minutes should reflect that executive session was entered into to “discuss the discipline of a staff member.”

Matters discussed in a lawfully convened executive session are confidential. The New York General Municipal Law prohibits board members, education corporation officers, and employees from disclosing confidential information acquired by them in the course of their official duties. Therefore, board members or any officer or employee permitted to attend the executive session may not disclose information they have acquired unless such information is otherwise available through public channels. A board may collectively decide to release such information. A board member may be compelled to disclose such information pursuant to legal proceedings. Due to the confidential nature of executive sessions, the recording of executive sessions is prohibited.

All members of the board may attend an executive session⁷ unless it pertains uniquely to a trustee (e.g., a related party transaction). The board may determine who else may attend but, due to the confidential nature of the information, the board should exercise discretion in deciding whom to invite into the executive session. Therefore, the board should limit attendance to those having special knowledge, expertise, or function that relates to the subject of the executive session. This may include the board’s counsel, school leader, or other administrator.



Open Meetings Law

Nuasin Next Generation Charter School

6

With certain limited exceptions, no official action can be taken on issues discussed in executive session without first returning to open session⁸ via motion and vote. The board may not vote to appropriate public money during an executive session.

iv. Meeting Materials

While the Open Meetings Law requires boards to post notices of all meetings, the law does not require a board to provide an agenda or summary of discussion points for the meeting. The law does require boards to make the documents scheduled to be discussed at a board meeting available upon request, to the extent practicable as determined by the board, both prior to and at the meeting during which the records will be discussed.

If the school maintains a website that is regularly and routinely updated, and utilizes a high speed connection, the records to be discussed at a board meeting must also be posted to the website prior to the meeting, to the extent practicable. The board may not have to post records which are voluminous and come into the board's possession shortly before a meeting due to the volume of materials and the effort needed to scan the papers in order to convert them to electronic format. However, if voluminous records are prepared and submitted electronically they would have to be posted to the website. If records are generated too close in time to the start of the public meeting to be posted online it is recommended that the public body provide paper copies at the meeting. If a document is not permitted to be released under FOIL it does not have to be posted under these requirements. To the extent that a draft document is not a proposed policy, resolution, law, or rule but is scheduled to be discussed during an open meeting, portions of the material may be subject to disclosure. Draft documents would generally fall under the category of "intra-agency material," which is largely exempt from disclosure. Portions of such documents that include statistical or factual tabulations or data; instructions to staff that affect the public; or final agency policy or determinations would need to be disclosed and posted online pursuant to Public Officers Law §103(e). Memoranda, research materials, and similar documentation that may have been prepared in support of or opposition to a proposed resolution, law, rule, or policy need not be disclosed or posted to the school website.

v. Minutes



Open Meetings Law

Nuasin Next Generation Charter School

7

Formal minutes must be taken at all board meetings. The minutes must consist of a record or summary of:

- all motions, proposals, resolutions, and other matters formally voted upon;
- the final vote of each board member on each item including the election of officers ; and,
- the result of any vote.

While minutes should not be a verbatim transcript of everything said at a meeting, minutes need to provide sufficient detail as to the proposal/resolution to allow the reader to understand the action that took place. For instance, stating that a contract was voted to be amended is insufficient. The minutes must reflect how the contract was amended by the vote. It is highly recommended that the appended minutes include a copy of the substance of any proposal/resolution.

The record of votes may not be destroyed. While boards are very limited in the actions they may take in executive session, where they do have such authority, the meeting minutes should reflect the final determination, the date, and the vote of the matter taken in executive session. The information provided may be limited so as not to release information that would not be available to the public under the [FOIL](#).

Minutes of the board meetings must be made available to the public within two weeks of the date of the meeting. Minutes recording action taken by formal vote at an executive session must be made available within one week. Under the Monitoring Plan of the Charter Agreement, minutes must be submitted to the Institute within 30 days. In many instances these will be draft minutes as boards do not normally approve the minutes of the meeting until the next scheduled meeting normally one month away. The available minutes may indicate they are draft but may not be withheld from the public for not being finalized. Please note there is no requirement under the law to approve the minutes but it is best practice to ensure the corporate records accurately reflect the conduct of the board. Minutes may be amended to clarify what actually occurred at a meeting, but not to reflect a change of mind which occurred after the meeting. Minutes may be amended or corrected only upon the majority vote of a public body.

vi. Public Comments

The Board of Trustees of Nuasin Next Generation Charter School desires to provide the general public with an opportunity at each Board meeting to address the Board regarding issues they may wish to



Open Meetings Law

Nuasin Next Generation Charter School

8

bring to the Board's attention. In order to facilitate a reasonable, orderly process for holding a public comment period, the Board sets forth the following procedure to be observed at each Board meeting:

- An individual wishing to address the Board is requested to provide their name or other identifier on the sign-in sheet available at the entrance to the room where the Board meeting is being held. If the Board meeting is being held remotely, please use the chat function to sign up.
- Any individual wishing to address the Board must sign up to do so prior to the call to order of the Board meeting. No requests to speak will be accepted after the meeting has begun.
- There will be a limit of ten (10) members of the public permitted to speak at any one Board meeting.
- Each person wishing to speak will be limited to three (2) minutes regardless of whether or not the permitted maximum of ten (10) people sign up to speak.
- Only the person who has signed up may speak and each person signed up to speak may speak only once at any one Board meeting.
- Members of the Board will respectfully listen to each public comment but shall not be obligated to respond in kind with questions, answers or other comments

D. Responsible Tasks

- Post notice of each board meeting publicly at the school, on the school's website, and provide to the news media.
- Ensure that quorum is present and that meetings are open to the public. If the board goes into executive session, include the motion and the specific reason for doing so.
- Ensure the board votes to leave executive session and closes the meeting in public session.
- Create minutes within two weeks of each board meeting (one week for executive session) and provide a copy to the Institute within 30 days.
- Include in the minutes a summary of all motions, resolutions, and matters formally voted and the results of those votes.

Nuasin Next Generation Charter School completes a monthly detailed audit to determine if we are compliant with the Open Meeting Law.