

# Special Responsibilities of the Public Body Chair

Issued by the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General's Division of Open Government  
November 2024

Several provisions of the Open Meeting Law and the Attorney General's Regulations impose responsibilities or authority specifically on the chair of a public body. The following is a non-exclusive list:

**Notice:** A public body must post notice of every meeting at least 48 hours in advance, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays. The notice must include the date, time, and place of the meeting, as well as **a list of topics that the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed.** General Laws chapter 30A, § 20(b); 940 CMR 29.03(1)(b). If the Chair delegates the task of drafting the meeting notice to another individual, the notice must include all topics that the Chair as well as the topics that the person drafting the notice reasonably anticipate will be discussed. See OML 2023-148; OML 2013-147.

**Remote Participation:** At the start of a meeting that includes any members of the public body participating remotely—including at a meeting that is held entirely remotely—the **chair or the person chairing the meeting shall announce the name of any member(s) participating remotely.** G.L. c. 30A, § 20(d); 940 CMR 29.10.

**Announcement of Meeting Recording:** At the beginning of the meeting, **the chair shall inform other attendees of any video or audio recordings of the meeting.** G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f)

**Public Participation:** Although all meetings, except for executive sessions, must be open to the public, **the chair has discretion whether to allow for public comment/public participation, and if public comment will be allowed, to set procedures or limitations on public comment.** Furthermore, if a person disrupts a meeting after a warning from the chair, the chair may order the person to leave the meeting and may authorize the person's removal. G.L. c. 30A, § 20(g).

**Executive Session:** The chair has several responsibilities with regard to executive sessions. First, in open session prior to convening in executive session, **the chair shall state the purpose for the executive session**, stating all subjects that may be revealed without compromising the purpose for which the executive session was called. G.L. c. 30A, § 21(b)3. If the public body will be meeting in executive session pursuant to Purposes 3, 6, or 8, **the chair must specifically declare that having the discussion in open session will have a detrimental effect** on the public body's bargaining or litigation position (Purpose 3), negotiating position (Purpose 6), or ability to obtain qualified applicants (Purpose 8). G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)3., 6., and 8. Finally, **the chair must publicly announce whether the open session will reconvene** at the conclusion of the executive session. G.L. c. 30A, § 21(b)4.

**Open Meeting Law Complaints:** Open Meeting Law complaints shall be **filed with the chair of the public body.** 940 CMR 29.05(3). Within 14 business days of receipt of the complaint, **the chair shall disseminate the complaint** to the members of the public body and the public body shall meet to review the complaint's allegations; take remedial action, if appropriate; and send to the complainant, with a copy to the Attorney General, a response and a description of any

remedial actions taken. 940 CMR 29.05(3), (5).

\*\* In general, where the Law requires a chair to take certain action or to make particular announcements, the Division of Open Government has stated that the chair may delegate these responsibilities to another individual, such as legal counsel or another member of the public body.

**Note that this checklist is intended as an educational guide, and does not constitute proof of compliance with the Open Meeting Law. Checklists are updated periodically, so please confirm that you are using the most current version. For questions, please contact the Attorney General's Division of Open Government at 617-963-2540 or via email at [openmeeting@mass.gov](mailto:openmeeting@mass.gov). For more information on the Open Meeting Law, please visit [www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting](http://www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting).**