

TOWN OF ORFORD

Meeting Notices, Agendas, Minutes and other Official Required Postings policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide for consistent publication of official notices, meeting notices, meeting agendas and meeting minutes as they pertain to Boards, Committees and Commissions of the Town of Orford.

Meeting Notices - Date & Time

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

All public bodies shall post their regularly scheduled meeting dates and times on the Town website and the website calendar at the start of each year or when changed during the year. The administrative assistant shall post the meeting schedules on the Town directory posted outside the Town office and on the Town website calendar.

When a public body wants to hold a meeting off its' regular scheduled time, the meeting notice shall be posted at the Town office, the Town website and calendar, and may also be posted on the Orford ListServ. Notice will be given to the Administrative Assistant to coordinate. Posting of meetings shall be done in accordance with RSA 91-A:2, II requirements, within 24 hours of the decision to hold such meeting, and not later than 1 business day before such meeting in any case.

Special Meetings

When a meeting is to be held that effects a majority of the residents it shall be announced, in addition to the regular requirements, by a mailing of a notice sent to all residents (town-wide mailer). Some examples are the annual Town meeting, and Special Town meetings.

Public Hearing Notices

All public hearing notices shall be posted in the Valley News and/or the Journal Opinion, at the Town office, Town website, Orford post office (and may also be posted on the Orford ListServ) stating the date, time and place. This information shall also be included on the Orford Webpage under "Upcoming Events". Public Hearing Notices must be posted 10 calendar days prior to the event.

Agendas & Draft Documents

Agendas

Meeting agendas are not required by RSA 91-A; however, agendas are generally published to inform citizens of the topics to be discussed, therefore agendas shall be provided for all meetings of Orford public bodies and shall be posted at the Town office and Town website at least twenty-four (24) hours before the meeting. Agendas may also be posted on the Orford List Serve.

Draft Documents

All drafts of public policy documents, such as a Master Plan, to be discussed at an upcoming meeting, shall be posted along with the agenda of the meeting in which it will be discussed.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of Public Body Meetings

Per RSA 91-A:4 minutes must be kept of all public body meetings, and the draft minutes must be available to the public upon request within five (5) business days after the close of the meeting.

Minimum content of meeting minutes must include:

1. Names of Members present
2. Other's on the agenda and/or addressing a specific agenda topic (it is not necessary to list everyone present, however);
3. a brief summary of subject matter discussed
4. any final decisions reached or action taken

Approved Minutes

Minutes of public body meetings shall be approved at the next regular meeting. Approved minutes shall be sent to the administrative assistant for posting and permanent storage. Minutes will be printed on paper using an ink that lasts 10 years as required by RSA. Minutes will be maintained at the Town office. Reference copies will be posted on the Town Website, Town Office Bulletin Board and may also be posted on the Orford ListServ.

Department Staff Meeting Minutes

Staff meetings do not fall under the "Right to Know" law, therefore, minutes are not required for these meetings.

Other Official Notices

Official notices as required for RFQ (request for qualification), RFB (request for bids) shall be posted in accordance with the Purchasing Policy.

Help wanted notices will be posted on the Town website under "Employment" as well as Orford List Serve, the Valley News and/or the Journal Opinion.

Definitions (per State of NH RSA)

Public Body

Public bodies include all municipal legislative and governing bodies and any “board, commission, committee, agency or authority” of any municipality. Expressly included are all subcommittees, subordinate bodies, or advisory committees of such bodies. (RSA 91-A:1-a, VI). Thus, *any subcommittee of a municipal body (such as a two or three-person subcommittee of a planning board) is a public body and must comply in all respects with the Right to Know Law.*

Non-Public bodies include staff meetings, department meetings, and meetings among individual officials who are not an official board, committee, commission, etc. For example, if the highway department has a staff meeting, that is not considered a meeting for purposes of RSA 91-A because those groups of employees are not an official public body.

Meeting

It is the convening of a quorum of a public body, (a majority of any board or committee constitutes a quorum, unless an applicable law or rule states otherwise), “whether in person, by means of telephone or electronic communication, or in any other manner such that all participating members are able to communicate contemporaneously,” for the purpose of discussing or acting upon any public business. (RSA 91A:2,I) Casual or social interaction of members of a public body, where no business is discussed are not considered a meeting.

Meeting Notice Requirement

All meetings must have at least 24-hour notice (not counting Sundays & Holidays) prior to the meeting. Notice must be either published in a newspaper or posted in two public places (RSA 91-A:2, II). If the municipality or the public body has an Internet Website, it may (but is not required to) use the website as one of the two public places for posting notices.

Official Posting Sites – Town Office Exterior Door, Orford Website, Valley News, Journal Opinion, and the Orford Post Office

Unofficial Posting Site – Orford ListServ

This policy shall be in effect until superseded.
Amended by Selectboard members on 04/12/2023

John Adams
Jennifer Carter
P. Chase Kling

Meeting Posting Dates

Public hearing notices are different from ordinary meeting notices. Since a hearing always occurs during a public meeting, the ordinary public meeting notice requirements do apply (minimum of 24 hours). However, different laws require different amounts of time for notice for different types of public hearings. Here is a sample:

Planning board hearings on an application – at least 10 days (RSA 676:4, I(d)(1)).

Zoning Board hearings – at least 5 days (RSA 676:7)

Budget hearings – at least 7 days (RSA 32:5, I)

Hearing on proposed bond of more than \$100,000 – at least 7 days (RSA 33:8-a)

Hearing on damages for change of road grade – at least 15 days (RSA 231:75)

Hearing on a public road layout – at least 30 days (RSA 231:9)

A general policy of posting notice of public hearings at least 10 days in advance will be fine in most situations; please just bear in mind that there are a few situations in which more than 10 days is required by law.