Public Meetings during COVID-19 Pandemic

House Bill 197 as passed provides “Public Bodies” with certain statutory relief during the COVID-19 Emergency. The following is meant to provide guidance to Public Bodies when navigating the various decisions to be made in light of HB 197. As always, any Public Body is encouraged to contact the Prosecutor’s Office for any clarification of this document, HB 197, or any other legal matters.

As used throughout this document and HB 197, a “Public Body” is defined in O.R.C. sec. 121.22 (B)(1)(a-c) means any of the following:

- board, commission, committee, council, or similar decision-making body of a state agency, institution, or authority, and any legislative authority, or
- board, commission, committee, council, agency, authority, or similar decision-making body of any county, township, municipal corporation, school district, or other political subdivision or local public institution;
- Any committee or subcommittee of any of the above
- a court of jurisdiction of a sanitary district organized wholly for the purpose of providing a water supply for domestic, municipal, and public use when meeting for the purpose of the appointment, removal, or reappointment of a member of the board of directors of such a district pursuant to section 6115.10 of the Revised Code,

A Meeting is a prearranged gathering of a majority of the public body members for discussing and deliberating public business. (This would include executive sessions.)

Public body holds an in-person meeting following all the rules set out in 121.22

Start: Public Body scheduled a meeting. Does it still want to hold the meeting?

Yes

Does the Public Body want to meet in-person?

Yes

Can the Public body give notice of the cancellation?

Yes

Meeting is cancelled.

No

Can the Public Body Comply with all Governor’s orders regarding attendance?

Yes

Public body holds an in-person meeting following all the rules set out in 121.22

No

Will the public have access to the meeting? (Note: there is nothing in Ohio that affords the public the right to speak at a public meeting.)

Public body may hold a remote meeting.

Yes