

# SUNSHINE ADVISORY

A Bulletin on Iowa Open Meetings and Public Records Laws

By Attorney General Tom Miller – February 2005

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## Agendas for Meetings -- Stamp it, Mail it!

**Are public officials required to mail agendas in advance of meetings? Who pays for copies and postage?**

Iowa law requires governmental bodies (except township trustees) to provide advance notice of the time, date, and place of each meeting -- and the tentative agenda. (See March 2002 Sunshine Advisory, "*Advance Agendas for Public Meetings.*") Such information is crucial for anyone who wants to follow the work of government. But how does the public actually receive this information in advance of the meeting? Is the governmental body required to mail copies of the notice and tentative agenda? Who pays for copies and postage?

- **News Media:** Iowa law permits news media to file requests with governmental bodies to receive the notice and tentative agenda for all meetings. The governmental body must pay all expenses related to making copies and mailing the notice and tentative agenda to the news media that have filed a request. Iowa Code sec. 21.4(1). (If no request is filed, there is no obligation to mail the notice and the tentative agenda.)
- **General Public:** Iowa law does not entitle members of the general public to file requests to receive the notice and tentative agenda by mail. As a result, governmental bodies may, but are not required to, impose charges for the actual costs of making copies and mailing notices and tentative agendas to the general public. Iowa Code sec. 22.3.
- **Alternate Sources:** Members of the general public who do not receive copies by mail may rely on the notices and tentative agendas posted at the principal office of the governmental body or, if no office exists, at the building where the meeting will be held. Iowa Code sec. 21.4(1). Of course, the governmental body also may choose to post the information on the Internet -- or to e-mail the information to persons who have provided e-mail addresses.

**Remember: The Open Meetings Law sets forth only minimum requirements. Public officials can go beyond minimum measures at little additional expense, for example, by posting the notice and the tentative agenda for a meeting on the Internet, or by e-mailing the notice and tentative agenda to those who have provided e-mail addresses.**

Citizens who have inquiries or complaints about public records or open meetings may call the Iowa Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman Office – toll-free at 888-IA-OMBUD (888-426-6283.)

"Sunshine Advisory" bulletins provide information on Iowa's public records and open meetings laws – our "Sunshine Laws." The bulletins are a resource for public officials and citizens. Local officials should obtain legal advice from their counsel, such as the city or county attorney.

**Iowa Attorney General's Office: Hoover Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.**

On the Web: [www.iowaattorneygeneral.org](http://www.iowaattorneygeneral.org) . (Click on "open government.")