

Question: As a newly elected local government official, what should I know about transparency in government?

Editor's Note: This is a monthly column prepared by the Iowa Public Information Board to update Iowans on the IPIB's activities and provide information on some of the issues routinely addressed by the board.



ANSWER: Whether you are a newly elected official, a newly appointed member of a governmental body or have been in your current position for years, you are responsible for being familiar with Iowa Code Chapter 21 (Open Meetings) and Chapter 22 (Public Records). Iowa Code section 21.10 states:

21.10 Information to be provided. *The authority which appoints members of governmental bodies shall provide the members with information about this chapter and chapter 22. The appropriate commissioner of elections shall provide that information to members of elected governmental bodies.*

It is important that the members of governmental bodies,

whether elected or appointed, are familiar with both chapters. Sections 21.6 and 22.10 impose sanctions upon violators of the transparency laws. Sanctions can include civil damages from \$100 to \$2500. Other sanctions can include payment of costs and attorney fees, voiding an action, and court-ordered removal from office.

The Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB) has a website with general information about Chapters 21 and 22: www.ipib.iowa.gov. The website has PowerPoint training materials under the TRAINING drop-down menu that can be utilized to provide basic information to new members of governmental bodies.

On the website, under IPIB

ACTIVITIES, all the training sessions around the state where IPIB staff are presenting are listed. The IPIB is also available to present training upon request. More information is available by contacting the IPIB office at (515) 725-1781.

Many support organizations, such as the Iowa State Association of Counties, the Iowa League of Cities, the Iowa County Attorney Association, the Iowa Association of School Boards, and others, present training on transparency throughout the year. Members of governmental bodies should contact their support organization to see what is available.

IPIB Facts and Figures

During the month of November 2014, 51 contacts were made with the Iowa Public Information Board office.

TYPE	NOVEMBER	JAN-NOV
Formal complaints	6	92
Formal opinions	2	7
Declaratory orders	0	4
Informal complaints	6	104
Informal requests	37	522
Misc.	0	6
TOTAL:	51	735