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IPIB Monthly Column

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From the Iowa Public Information Board

By Margaret E. Johnson, Executive Director

QUESTION: Are the pandemic open meetings and public records restrictions still in place?

ANSWER: No. Beginning in March 2020, the Governor of Iowa, pursuant to her emergency powers, enacted various modifications of state laws as public safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of these measures, certain aspects of open meetings and public records laws in Iowa Code chapters 21 and 22 were suspended. These proclamations allowed government and governmental bodies to hold meetings remotely, limit access to public buildings, and modify in person access to public records.

The most recent proclamation expired on July 25, 2021. At this time, all government bodies are required to follow the open meetings and public records laws without modification. Governmental bodies may still have electronic meetings, following the requirements of Iowa Code section 21.8. A governmental body can still provide the public with electronic access to an open meeting, in addition to in person access.

The Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB) website lists the full text of chapters 21 and 22. In addition, the website has a section entitled FAQs (frequently asked questions) that provides guidance for properly observing Iowa's transparency laws. Questions can be directed to the IPIB by using the "Ask a Question" link on the website or by calling the IPIB at 515-725-1781.

Did You Know that the Iowa Public Information Board staff is available to assist you with questions or problems involving open meetings and public records in Iowa? During the month of July 2021, 45 contacts were made with the Iowa Public Information Board office.

TYPE	July 2021
Formal complaints	7
Advisory opinions	1
Declaratory orders	0
Informal complaints	1
Informal requests	32
Miscellaneous	4
TOTAL:	45

Board Members

Joan Corbin • E. J. Giovannetti • Barry Lindahl • Keith Luchtel • Monica McHugh
Frederick Morain • Julie Pottorff • Suzan Stewart • Stan Thompson

Who can contact the IPIB and how long does it take? Any person can contact the IPIB for assistance by telephone (515-725-1781), by email, or on the IPIB website. So far in 2021, 419 identifiable people have contacted the IPIB. Of these, 219 were private citizens, 153 were government officials or employees, and 47 were members of the media. In 2021, 72% of the incoming contacts were resolved the first day, 12% were resolved in one to five days, and 16% were resolved in six or more days. Opinions, rulings, FAQs, reports, and training documents are available on the IPIB website – www.ipib.iowa.gov.