LEGISLATIVE BILL 212

Introduced by Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee:
Brewer, 43, Chairperson; Blood, 3; Hansen, M., 26; La Grone, 49; Lowe, 37.

Read first time January 11, 2019

Committee: Government, Military and Veterans Affairs

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to the Open Meetings Act; to amend section
2 84-1411, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2018; to change
3 provisions relating to videoconferences and telephone conferencing;
4 and to repeal the original section.

5 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,
Section 1. Section 84-1411, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2018, is amended to read:

84-1411 (1) Each public body shall give reasonable advance publicized notice of the time and place of each meeting by a method designated by each public body and recorded in its minutes. Such notice shall be transmitted to all members of the public body and to the public. Such notice shall contain an agenda of subjects known at the time of the publicized notice or a statement that the agenda, which shall be kept continually current, shall be readily available for public inspection at the principal office of the public body during normal business hours. Agenda items shall be sufficiently descriptive to give the public reasonable notice of the matters to be considered at the meeting. Except for items of an emergency nature, the agenda shall not be altered later than (a) twenty-four hours before the scheduled commencement of the meeting or (b) forty-eight hours before the scheduled commencement of a meeting of a city council or village board scheduled outside the corporate limits of the municipality. The public body shall have the right to modify the agenda to include items of an emergency nature only at such public meeting.

(2) A meeting of a state agency, state board, state commission, state council, or state committee, of an advisory committee of any such state entity, of an organization created under the Interlocal Cooperation Act, the Joint Public Agency Act, or the Municipal Cooperative Financing Act, of the governing body of a public power district having a chartered territory of more than one county in this state, of the governing body of a public power and irrigation district having a chartered territory of more than one county in this state, of a board of an educational service unit, of the Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council, of the governing body of a risk management pool or its advisory committees organized in accordance with the Intergovernmental Risk Management Act, or of a community college board of governors may be held by means of
videoconferencing or, in the case of the Judicial Resources Commission in those cases specified in section 24-1204, by telephone conference, if:

(a) Reasonable advance publicized notice is given;

(b) Reasonable arrangements are made to accommodate the public's right to attend, hear, and speak at the meeting, including seating, recordation by audio or visual recording devices, and a reasonable opportunity for input such as public comment or questions to at least the same extent as would be provided if videoconferencing or telephone conferencing was not used;

(c) At least one copy of all documents being considered is available to the public at each site of the videoconference or telephone conference;

(d) At least one member of the state entity, advisory committee, board, council, or governing body is present at each site of the videoconference or telephone conference, except that a member of an organization created under the Interlocal Cooperation Act that sells electricity or natural gas at wholesale on a multistate basis, an organization created under the Municipal Cooperative Financing Act, or a governing body of a risk management pool or an advisory committee of such organization or pool may designate a nonvoting designee, who shall not be included as part of the quorum, to be present at any site; and

(e)(i) Except as provided in subdivision (2)(e)(ii) of this section, no more than one-half of the state entity's, advisory committee's, board's, council's, or governing body's meetings in a calendar year are held by videoconference or telephone conference; or

(ii) In the case of an organization created under the Interlocal Cooperation Act that sells electricity or natural gas at wholesale on a multistate basis or an organization created under the Municipal Cooperative Financing Act, such organization holds at least one meeting each calendar year that is not by videoconferencing or telephone conferencing.
Videoconferencing, telephone conferencing, or conferencing by other electronic communication shall not be used to circumvent any of the public government purposes established in the Open Meetings Act.

(3) A meeting of a board of an educational service unit, of the Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council, of the governing body of an entity formed under the Interlocal Cooperation Act, the Joint Public Agency Act, or the Municipal Cooperative Financing Act, of the governing body of a risk management pool or its advisory committees organized in accordance with the Intergovernmental Risk Management Act, of a community college board of governors, of the governing body of a public power district, of the governing body of a public power and irrigation district, or of the Nebraska Brand Committee may be held by telephone conference call if:

(a) The territory represented by the educational service unit, member educational service units, community college board of governors, public power district, public power and irrigation district, Nebraska Brand Committee, or member public agencies of the entity or pool covers more than one county;

(b) Reasonable advance publicized notice is given which identifies each telephone conference location at which there will be present: (i) A member of the an educational service unit board member, a council member, a member of a community college board of governors, a member of the governing body of a public power district, a member of the governing body of a public power and irrigation district, a member of the Nebraska Brand Committee, or a member of the entity's or pool's governing body; or will be present (ii) A nonvoting designee designated under subdivision (3)(f) of this section;

(c) All telephone conference meeting sites identified in the notice are located within public buildings used by members of the educational service unit board, council, community college board of governors, governing body of the public power district, governing body of the public
power and irrigation district, Nebraska Brand Committee, or entity or
pool or at a place which will accommodate the anticipated audience;

(d) Reasonable arrangements are made to accommodate the public's
right to attend, hear, and speak at the meeting, including seating,
recording by audio recording devices, and a reasonable opportunity for
input such as public comment or questions to at least the same extent as
would be provided if a telephone conference call was not used;

(e) At least one copy of all documents being considered is available
to the public at each site of the telephone conference call;

(f) At least one member of the educational service unit board,
council, community college board of governors, governing body of the
public power district, governing body of the public power and irrigation
district, Nebraska Brand Committee, or governing body of the entity or
pool is present at each site of the telephone conference call identified
in the public notice, except that a member of an organization created
under the Interlocal Cooperation Act that sells electricity or natural
gas at wholesale on a multistate basis, an organization created under the
Municipal Cooperative Financing Act, or a governing body of a risk
management pool or an advisory committee of such organization or pool may
designate a nonvoting designee, who shall not be included as part of the
quorum, to be present at any site;

(g) The telephone conference call lasts no more than five two hours;
and

(h) No more than one-half of the board's, council's, governing
body's, committee's, entity's, or pool's meetings in a calendar year are
held by telephone conference call, except that: a
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(i) The governing body of a risk management pool that meets at least
quarterly and the advisory committees of the governing body may each hold
more than one-half of its meetings by telephone conference call if the
governing body's quarterly meetings are not held by telephone conference
call or videoconferencing; and
(ii) An organization created under the Interlocal Cooperation Act that sells electricity or natural gas at wholesale on a multistate basis or an organization created under the Municipal Cooperative Financing Act may hold more than one-half of its meetings by telephone conference call if the organization holds at least one meeting each calendar year that is not by videoconferencing or telephone conference call.

Nothing in this subsection shall prevent the participation of consultants, members of the press, and other nonmembers of the governing body at sites not identified in the public notice. Telephone conference calls, emails, faxes, or other electronic communication shall not be used to circumvent any of the public government purposes established in the Open Meetings Act.

(4) The secretary or other designee of each public body shall maintain a list of the news media requesting notification of meetings and shall make reasonable efforts to provide advance notification to them of the time and place of each meeting and the subjects to be discussed at that meeting.

(5) When it is necessary to hold an emergency meeting without reasonable advance public notice, the nature of the emergency shall be stated in the minutes and any formal action taken in such meeting shall pertain only to the emergency. Such emergency meetings may be held by means of electronic or telecommunication equipment. The provisions of subsection (4) of this section shall be complied with in conducting emergency meetings. Complete minutes of such emergency meetings specifying the nature of the emergency and any formal action taken at the meeting shall be made available to the public by no later than the end of the next regular business day.

(6) A public body may allow a member of the public or any other witness other than a member of the public body to appear before the public body by means of video or telecommunications equipment.
Supplement, 2018, is repealed.