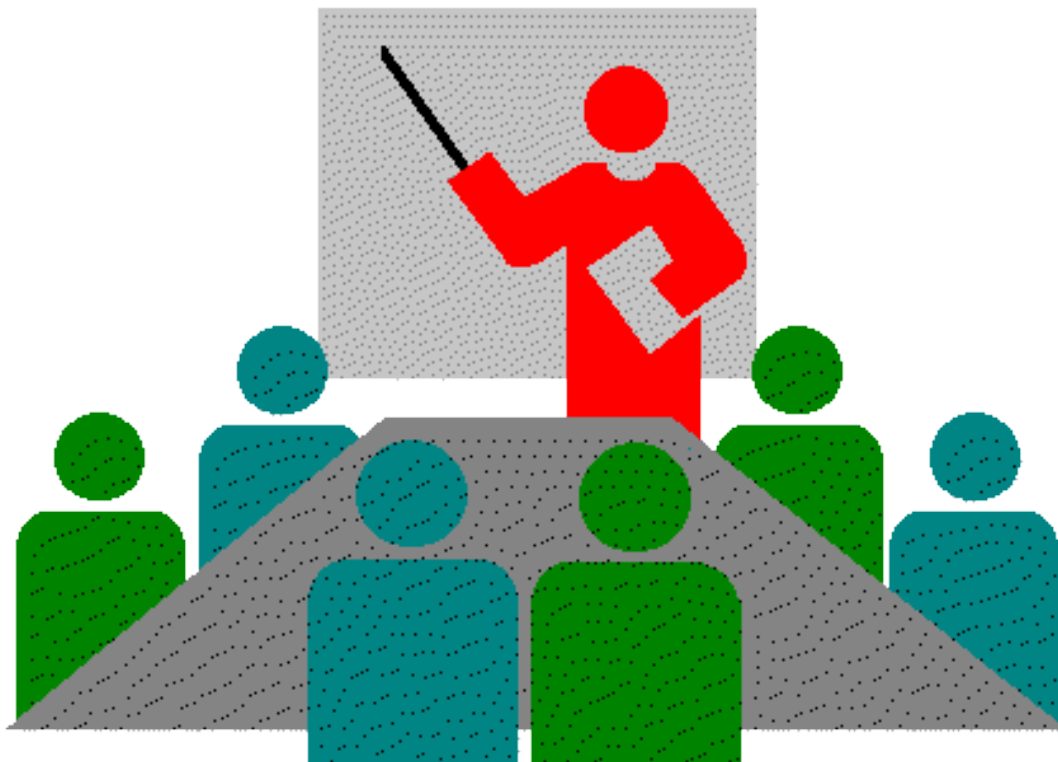


How Open is Your Local Government?

Compliance with Open Meeting Laws in the Northeast Metro Twin Cities



A study by the League of Women Voters
White Bear Lake Area

May, 2016



Minnesota Communities Studied

Afton	Lake Elmo	Scandia
Arden Hills	Lake St. Croix Beach	Shoreview
Bayport	Lakeland	Stillwater
Baytown Township	Lakeland Shores	Stillwater Township
Birchwood Village	Lino Lakes	St. Mary's Point
Centerville	Mahtomedi	Vadnais Heights
Dellwood	Marine on St. Croix	West Lakeland Township
Forest Lake	May Township	White Bear Lake
Gem Lake	North Oaks	White Bear Township
Grant	Oak Park Heights	Willernie
Hugo	Pine Springs	

Committee

Gretchen Davidson	Stephanie McNamara	Joan Sullivan
Kathy Gaylord	Gladys Ritter	Carolyn Wensman
Liz Lauder	Mary Santi	
Jeanne LeFevre	Lori Soukup	

Volunteer Observers and Interviewers

We could not have covered as much ground without you, especially since most council meetings that were attended were held on freezing cold evenings in the winter.

Molly Anthony	Joanne Gustafson	Jan Rupert
Beverley Driscoll	Mary Johnston	Miriam Simmons
Judy Duffy	Ruth Jones	Eleanore Troxel
Carolyn Folke	Judy Ottman	Diane Wigglesworth
Karen Gochberg	Gloria Phillips	



League of Women Voters White Bear Lake Area, May, 2016

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How Open is Your Local Government?

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Foreword

In 2014 the League of Women Voters (LWV) White Bear Lake Area undertook a study of local municipalities' adherence to Minnesota's Open Meeting Law. Legal requirements for open meetings in Minnesota are minimal. After observing and interviewing in each of 27 cities and four townships in the local LWV area, the study committee found that municipalities in its jurisdiction meet legal requirements. Most municipalities go beyond legal requirements to provide citizens with meeting agendas and minutes, and many make meetings available via live stream or on cable television. Every community allowed time for public comments.

The committee also looked at other aspects of public meetings that are of interest to LWV, such as physical accommodations and how meetings were conducted. Although the Open Meeting Law does not address decorum, most meetings were conducted in a professional manner and council and board members appeared attentive and well prepared. There were several instances where observers noted decorum issues which affected the ability of the local council or board to serve its constituents effectively.

Introduction

League of Women Voters has a longstanding commitment to open government and civic engagement. Since its founding in 1920, the League has been a champion of government transparency. LWV principles state that democratic government depends on the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know. Prompted by these principles and a 2012 public forum on the Minnesota Open Meeting Law (OML) led by Laurie Beyer-Kropuenske of the Minnesota Department of Administration, as well as by media coverage of local government decisions, LWV White Bear Lake Area undertook a study of adherence to Minnesota's Open Meeting Law by city councils and town boards within the area served by LWV White Bear Lake Area.* Following formal approval by the membership in April 2014, a committee

The purpose of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law is to ensure that all governmental bodies meet openly so that the public feels their government is accessible, honest, accountable and responsive.

* The area served by LWV White Bear Lake Area encompasses 26 cities and 5 townships in the northeast suburban Twin Cities. Alphabetically, the municipalities are Afton, Arden Hills, Bayport, Baytown Township, Birchwood Village, Centerville, Dellwood, Forest Lake, Gem Lake, Grant, Hugo, Lake Elmo, Lake St. Croix Beach, Lakeland, Lakeland Shores, Lino Lakes, Mahtomedi, Marine on St. Croix, May Township, North Oaks, Oak Park Heights, Pine Springs, Scandia, Shoreview, Stillwater, Stillwater Township, St. Mary's Point, Vadnais Heights, West Lakeland Township, White Bear Lake, White Bear Township and Willernie.

of volunteers met bi-weekly starting in June 2014 to plan and implement the study. The study surveyed and compared local governments within the local LWV membership area on their adherence to Minnesota open meeting laws and other meeting practices—both what is required by Minnesota law such as giving notice, and what cities provide that is not required, such as allowing people to speak, taking and publishing minutes, televising meetings, etc. Committee volunteers also observed certain process and protocol components of meetings as recommended by League of Women Voters of the United States, such as who was present, the physical environment of the meeting venue and how the meeting was conducted.

According to the LWVUS observer handbook *Observing Your Government in Action*, (http://lww.org/files/LWVEF_ObservingYourGovernment.pdf) open meeting laws serve three vital purposes:

- Ensure the public's right to be informed
- Give the public an opportunity to present its views
- Prohibit actions from being taken at a secret meeting where the interested public cannot be fully informed of the decisions of public bodies or detect improper influences.

Summary of Minnesota's Open Meeting Law

The Minnesota Open Meeting Law, first enacted in 1957, was later amended and re-codified in MN Statutes chapter 13D.

Purposes of Open Meeting Law

According to the Minnesota Supreme Court, the Open Meeting Law has three purposes: preventing governmental bodies from taking actions in secret meetings which prevents the public from being fully informed about a public body's decisions, insuring the public's right to be informed and allowing the public an opportunity to present its views to the public body. (Note that while the courts consistently mention the opportunity for members of the public to present their views as a purpose of the Open Meeting Law, the law itself does not create a general right for members of the public to speak at meetings.)

Entities Covered by the Law

The law applies to state and local multimember governmental bodies including committees and subcommittees as well as nonprofits created by political subdivisions. A separate law applies to the state legislature.

Situations in Which the Law Applies

A "meeting" for purposes of the law occurs when a quorum or more of the governmental body is gathered either in person or electronically, whether or not action is taken or considered. Minnesota's Open Meeting Law does not address whether a governmental body must keep or publish meeting minutes, hold a meeting for a particular purpose or allow members of the public to address the body. (Note that for particular governmental bodies there may be other laws or charter provisions that do require these actions.)

Court cases have established that open meetings must take place in a public place

Approval to survey local governments about their adherence to Minnesota's Open Meeting Law came from the membership at the League of Women Voters White Bear Lake Area's Annual Meeting April 24, 2014.

Actions taken at a meeting held in violation of the Open Meeting Law are still valid. However the law provides for penalties and possible removal from office for violators.

within municipal borders and that no business can be conducted before the announced meeting time.

What Constitutes an “Open Meeting?”

A meeting is open when proper notice is given in advance of the meeting, the public may attend and observe and relevant materials are available to the public.

Exceptions to the Law

A meeting may be closed based on a limited attorney-client privilege and for the purposes of labor negotiations, employee evaluations and discussion of security issues and property transactions. The law does not apply to a public body conducting quasi-judicial proceedings such as disciplinary hearings. Meetings held in private pursuant to this exception are subject to a requirement that a recording be made of the meeting.

Violations of the Law

Actions taken at a meeting held in violation of the law are still valid. However the law provides for penalties and possible removal from office for violators.

Selection of Study Subjects

While many possible governmental bodies are subject to the Open Meeting Law, such as county boards, school boards, state and local agencies, their committees, and more, the study committee determined that regular city council meetings or township board meetings would be the focus of the study. Local boards have regularly scheduled meetings and are more geographically accessible to constituents. In addition, local municipalities have similar agendas and would be comparable in determining compliance with the Open Meeting Law.

With a limited number of League volunteers, and the number of council/board meetings needed to be covered, the committee limited its initial observations to one in each community. Some volunteers were able to observe in two or three municipalities and some municipalities were observed more than once.

Members of the study committee also interviewed clerks or administrators in each municipality. Observers completed report forms and took note of the physical spaces and amenities.

A “meeting” occurs when a quorum or more of the governmental body is gathered, either in person or electronically, and whether or not action is taken or considered.

Study Procedures

Approval to survey local governments about their adherence to Minnesota’s Open Meeting Law came from the membership at the League of Women Voters White Bear Lake Area’s Annual Meeting April 24, 2014.

Gathering Preliminary Information

To gain a working understanding of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law, the study committee researched a variety of sources. Stacie Christensen (Administrator) of the Minnesota Department of Administration’s Information Policy Administration Division (IPAD) met with committee members early on and shared an overview of

the law's history, strengths, weaknesses and current state of enforcement. She provided written information, including their Open Meeting Law Checklist, which is a detailed listing of what is required and not required by Minnesota's Open Meeting Law. Christensen also met with the committee a second time to review the survey draft and discuss the study's progress.

Committee members became familiar with the text of the Open Meeting Law and *The Minnesota Open Meeting Law Information Brief*, by Deborah A. Dyson of the Minnesota House Research Department. They did online research for information on open meeting laws in other states and how their laws compare with ours. State comparisons are too complex to be included in this report. Committee members interviewed Press Publications' publisher and editors concerning their experiences observing municipal meetings in the northeast metro area.

Designing the Forms

The committee decided one-page forms should be used to compile the desired information and report it in a concise manner. Guided by the Open Meeting Law Checklist provided by the Minnesota Department of Administration and a how-to publication, *Observing Your Government in Action*, from the national League of Women Voters, the committee developed checklists for volunteers. One form was used for observing meetings, another for interviewing administrators.

Determining Whom to Contact in each City or Township, and Why

The committee decided that administrators would be the most knowledgeable source of information about city/township meeting practices. City/township clerks or websites were good sources for the municipalities' contact information.

Gathering Information through Observations and Interviews

After the committee planned, designed and developed the survey process and materials, several committee members conducted pilot interviews and observed meetings to test the survey tools they developed.

The committee developed a training session using what they learned from observing and interviewing pilot communities. Coordinated by committee members, volunteers researched and interviewed staff at each municipality within the study area and observed one or more meetings of each council or board. All findings were collected for review and analysis.

Forms used in the study can be found in Appendix A. They include Minnesota Open Meeting Law Observation Report and Minnesota Open Meeting Law Interview Report.

League of Women Voters volunteer observers attended at least one regularly scheduled meeting in each of the municipalities in the area covered by LWV White Bear Lake Area.

Findings

Legal Requirements

Minnesota law regarding open meetings is not demanding. The law requires that regular meeting dates must be on file and special meetings must be posted. If there is an agenda it must be available to the public. One copy of materials that are made available to council members must be made available to the public. Not included in the law but generally observed because of case law is the requirement that

meetings be held within municipal boundaries.

LWV volunteer observers attended at least one regularly scheduled meeting in each of the municipalities in the area covered by League of Women Voters White Bear Lake Area. Volunteers observing public meetings were encouraged to introduce themselves to the council as a matter of courtesy and League visibility. Follow-up visits were made to a few municipalities to verify findings. Volunteers conducted interviews with city or town administrators in each community to audit other requirements of the law. The committee was unable to visit Pine Springs.

Observers reported on other components of municipal meetings as recommended by League of Women Voters. These items included who was present at meetings and where and how the meeting was conducted.

All meetings were held in public places, most within municipal borders. City of Dellwood council meets in a neighboring City Hall. Municipal annual meetings are occasionally held in another, larger location not within municipal borders. Both Gem Lake City Council and White Bear Township Board hold their meetings in Heritage Hall, which was built on a site in the township that abuts the City of Gem Lake. Through joint powers agreements the township provided the site and utilities and Gem Lake constructed the building. They share use of the building with Ramsey County Sheriff's Office.

All of the observed meetings opened on time or within a few minutes after the announced starting time.

All municipalities had a quorum of council and board members present at meetings that were observed. Observers noted several instances of members attending meetings via video conferencing, which is allowed by law. A Hugo City Council member participated through video conferencing while in Florida. Also the White Bear Press reported that at one White Bear Lake meeting, Council Member Doug Biehn cast the deciding vote via Skype to override Mayor Emerson's veto on a variance request by a business owner.

Most communities had at least one meeting agenda available to the public in the meeting room. Some observers had to ask for this. Only one agenda for the public is required by law to be made available. A number of municipalities posted the agenda on their website or displayed it on a screen during the meeting.

At least one copy of materials supporting the agenda that are provided to council members is required to be available to the public in the meeting room. Observers in a number of communities were unable to locate these printed materials. The observer in White Bear Lake and White Bear Township made a point of asking to see the materials. In a number of municipalities the supporting materials were displayed on a screen.

Schedules of regular meetings were kept on file in all municipalities and meetings are generally posted on websites.

Twenty-four of the municipalities studied reported having held at least one non-regular meeting during the past twelve months. According to interviewers, advance

Observers noted several instances of council members attending meetings via video conferencing which is allowed by law.

It pays to ask. If you don't see the agenda in the meeting room (which is required by law) or any supporting documents, you may have to ask a staff member. While all of the municipalities in our study made meeting minutes available to the public, in two communities the minutes are kept in the City Clerk's home. To see them you need to make an appointment.

written notice of special meetings was provided in all cases where applicable except in Shoreview. This community had an emergency meeting in 2014 involving an issue on Snail Lake. The meeting was held on short notice and no notification was possible. A sign was placed on the front door of the meeting room at the time of the meeting.

The Open Meeting Law requires that votes taken at a meeting be recorded and kept in a journal available to the public during regular business hours. All cities and townships surveyed complied with this requirement.

Although only a journal of votes taken is required to be kept, all municipalities took meeting minutes and kept archived copies of them. Paper copies are typically kept in the office. Some communities also make minutes available on their websites. Marine on St. Croix maintains archived minutes on microfiche. Interviewers were not instructed to inquire how long minutes were kept. Some communities volunteered that information. The length of time ranged from three years to forever (Oak Park Heights).

Physical Accommodations

Except for the need for a meeting place to be handicapped-accessible and open to the public, state law does not have requirements for the physical space where a meeting is held. Observers noted that all meeting places were clean and well lit. Most, but not all, have restrooms. Observers reported not being able to hear the proceedings at several meetings (Gem Lake, Mahtomedi, North Oaks and Stillwater Township). Either there was no public address system or council members did not speak into their microphones. It was not always easy to hear what speakers from the floor had to say. Proceedings could not be seen in two communities (North Oaks where a speaker's lectern blocked view and Stillwater Township where the meeting had an overflow crowd.) Scandia did not have adequate seating for everyone who attended its annual meeting. City of Grant's meeting hall had a handicapped ramp but there was a 2-3 inch step up to the doorway.

None of the communities surveyed opened their council proceedings with prayer. A number of municipalities opened their meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Who Attends Meetings

The number of staff present ranged from a high of 11 in Scandia (it was an annual meeting where staff were being recognized) to two staff present in three cities. A City Clerk, City Administrator/Manager and City Attorney were the staff most commonly present.

LWV observers reported that students were present at seven council meetings. Eleven meetings had people present representing special interests. Frequently those people left the meeting once their business was conducted.

Members of the local press attended at least ten meetings. Note that it is possible for press to cover meetings using live or recorded cable coverage.

Interactions

The Open Meeting Law does not address specific etiquette or require that municipalities follow *Robert's Rules of Order*. All followed preset agendas.

None of the communities surveyed opened their council proceedings with prayer

unlike Minnesota's state legislature, which does. A number of municipalities opened their meetings with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Observers found that the vast majority of council meetings were under control and conducted in a professional manner. Two exceptions were the Cities of Grant and Lake Elmo. Observers at several Grant meetings found council members speaking over each other, name calling and accusing each other of wrongdoing. One observer felt in her opinion that all parties were equally at fault for the disorder at the Grant City Council meeting.

Lake Elmo has a history of rude and divisive behavior. Their insurance carrier (League of Minnesota Cities) told council members in 2015 to treat each other with respect or risk higher insurance payments from costly legal settlements.¹ The council is now run by an outside, paid parliamentarian.

Observers found that all of the council members appeared attentive to city business. In the reporters' opinions the public was treated with respect at all observed meetings.

All of the cities and townships in our area allowed time for public comment.

Going Over and Above

The Open Meeting Law gives the public the right to attend meetings of public bodies in order to watch and listen to the proceedings. It does not guarantee the right to speak at a public meeting. All of the cities and townships in our area allowed time for public comment. However if a public body chooses to allow public comments it can set parameters for comments. A common parameter is the amount of time allowed for each comment or the requirement to sign up ahead of time to speak. Time for public comment is usually placed early in the agenda so the commenter need not stay for the entire meeting.

The City of Shoreview has a statute that insures time at meetings for public comment.

A city council or township board has the ability to add and/or subtract items from its agenda before its regular meeting begins (with the exception of a special meeting, which is limited to the items identified in the notice of the meeting). There is no corresponding ability for the public to add or subtract agenda items. However all surveyed meetings except Oak Park Heights had provisions for the public to put an item on the agenda. Placing an item on an agenda was typically done by contacting the clerk or a council member before the meeting. (The method for placing an item on the agenda by the public varied by community.)

The Open Meeting Law does not require regular meetings to be recorded or aired. However, minutes were taken (and archived) and many meetings were streamed live and/or placed on cable television or on the municipal website for viewing. All communities in the study record meeting minutes and make them available to the public either in print format (available in the office) or online or both. Many also provide archived tapings of their meetings on municipal websites.

Some communities add specific requirements by local ordinance that affect their

¹ St Paul Pioneer Press, October 24, 2015. "Lake Elmo warned to be nice or risk paying a price.

meetings. For instance the City of Shoreview has a statute that insures time at meetings for public comment.

Keeping in Touch with Residents

Most municipalities use local newspapers, city newsletters and their own websites as primary tools for communicating with the public in general. Other methods include email, U.S. Postal Service, bulletin boards, cable television, and Facebook. One community (Lake Elmo) mentioned that they have a code red telephone system to notify residents in the case of emergencies.

Looking Ahead

The Illinois-based Citizen Advocacy Center, through its Midwest Open Government Project, has proposed model statute changes to Minnesota's Open Meeting Law. Among the things they recommend are requirements for public comment at meetings, posted agendas and detailed, written minutes for all meetings, better meeting notice requirements and increased remedies for violations of the law. The proposed changes would remove the option to close meetings based on attorney-client privilege.

LWV White Bear Lake Area encourages its members and others to attend city council and township board meetings regularly, not just to carry out personal business, but to be "watchdogs" of the public's interest in government that is accessible, honest, accountable and responsive.

Sharing the Information

Study results will be made available to the LWV White Bear Lake Area membership for presentation at unit meetings and/or for distribution with our monthly newsletter *The Bear Facts*. Results will be provided to cities and townships included in the study either by paper or electronic copies. Results will be submitted to LWV Minnesota with the request that they be made available to other local Leagues to use as a template for similar studies in their own local area. Additionally, results of the study will be submitted to the LWVUS Clearinghouse for use by other state and local Leagues, and for availability nationally to the general public. The clearinghouse can be found on Google at <https://sites.google.com/a/leagueofwomenvoters.org/clearinghouse/home>. Visitors can search by topic or for studies by LWV White Bear Lake.

Appendix A

Report Forms Used in Study

Minnesota Open Meeting Law Report Forms for Observing Meetings and Interviewing Staff of Public Bodies LWV WBLA 2014

Public Bodies

The Minnesota Open Meeting Law (OML), Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13D, says that all meetings of public bodies must be open for the public to attend and observe. According to Minn. Stat. section 13D.01, the following public bodies are subject to the OML:

- State Government – agencies, boards, commissions and departments
- Local Government – school districts, unorganized territories, counties, cities (statutory or home rule) towns, committees, subcommittees, boards (includes joint powers boards), departments, commissions
- Pension Plans – governing body or committee of a statewide or local public pension plan
- Meetings not subject to the OML – Commissioner of Corrections; state agency, board or commission exercising a quasi-judicial function involving disciplinary proceedings; and public bodies exempted by another law

Meeting Types and Public Notice Requirements

Meeting Type	Public Notice Type	Advance Notice
Regular	A schedule of the public body's regular meetings must be kept on file at its primary offices.	No advance notice is required.
Special	Three days prior to meeting: post written notice on principal bulletin board or usual meeting room door and notify those who made a written request to be notified, or publish notice in an official newspaper.	Give notice three days prior to the meeting.
Emergency	Notice must be given to members of the public body, and news media who have filed written request including their phone number.	Emergency meetings occur in situations where it is not feasible to wait three days to meet. Public notice given through limited news media.
Closed	When closing a meeting for labor negotiations strategy, among other permitted reasons, closed meeting time and date must be announced at a prior public meeting.	Statement on the record prior to closing a meeting is required
Electronic	If a telephone or another electronic means is used to conduct any meeting, the public body must give notice of the regular meeting location and any location where a member of the public body will be participating electronically.	Timing and method of notice depend on the type of meeting: regular, special or emergency.

Social Media – The 2014 legislature enacted a new provision permitting discussions between a member of the public body and all members of the general public. Email is specifically excluded.

Not Required under the OML – Public bodies are not required to provide advance, posted notice of regular meetings. The OML does not give the public a right to speak at an open meeting. An action by a public body taken in violation of the OML cannot be reversed or voided due to the violation. No agenda is required.

**Minnesota Open Meeting Law
Observation Report
LWV WBLA 2014**

PUBLIC BODY _____ DATE _____

TYPE of MEETING * ☐ Regular ☐ Special

THOSE PRESENT

- Number of members present _____ Number of members absent _____
- Staff present ☐ City Manager ☐ Administrator ☐ City Engineer ☐ Legal Officer
☐ Secretary ☐ Police/Safety ☐ Finance Director ☐ Other _____
- Number of public present ☐ 0—5 ☐ 6—12 ☐ 13—19 ☐ 20 or more
- ☐ Students present ☐ Special interests present ☐ Press coverage

FACILITIES

- ☐ Handicapped accessible ☐ Big enough ☐ Clean ☐ Well lit ☐ Could hear
☐ Could see officials ☐ Adequate seating ☐ Public place within municipal borders *

AGENDA

- Was an agenda available? (Please attach a copy, if possible) ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Was at least one copy of materials relating to agenda items and given to members available in the meeting room for inspection by the public? * ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Were agenda items clearly described? ☐ Yes ☐ No

PROCEEDINGS

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Meeting started on time? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Opened with prayer? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Presiding officer had meeting under control? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Members attentive and alert? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Members appeared prepared for the meeting? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Members courteous to each other? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Discussion stuck to the agenda? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Decisions made after adequate discussion? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Public treated with respect? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Time for public comment? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Other comments? Please use the back of the sheet if needed.

Observer name _____ Date submitted _____

* Minnesota Open Meeting Law Requirement

**Minnesota Open Meeting Law
Interview Report
LWV WBLA 2014**

NAME OF PERSON INTERVIEWED _____ POSITION _____

Term ends (M/Y) _____ Phone _____ Email _____

1. Is a schedule of regular meetings kept on file in the primary office? * ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Have there been any non-regular (special, emergency, or closed) meetings during the past year? (Ask for type, number of and reason for all non-regular meetings.) ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Was written notice of special meetings posted on the principal bulletin board or door of the meeting room; or public notice mailed or published 3 days in advance of the meeting? * ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Was public notice given in advance of any emergency or electronic meeting? * ☐ Yes ☐ No How?
5. Is at least one copy of any printed materials relating to agenda items and given to all members, also routinely available in the meeting room for inspection by the public during the meeting? * ☐ Yes ☐ No How?
6. Do meetings routinely open with prayer? ☐ Yes ☐ No Who?
7. If so, is there planned rotation of affiliations of those giving prayer? ☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Does the public have an opportunity to comment at meetings? ☐ Yes ☐ No How?
9. Is there opportunity for the public to put an item on the agenda? ☐ Yes ☐ No How?
10. Are regular meetings recorded? (Required for most closed meetings) * ☐ Yes ☐ No How?
11. Is a journal of votes open to the public during all normal business hours where public body's records are kept? * ☐ Yes ☐ No
12. Are meeting minutes available to the public? ☐ Yes ☐ No How?
13. Are meeting minutes archived? ☐ Yes ☐ No How?
14. Do other requirements including, but not limited to, ordinance, bylaws or charter affect your meetings? ☐ Yes ☐ No How?
15. What other methods do you use to communicate with the public about meetings?
16. Other comments? Please use the back of the sheet if needed.

Interviewer name _____ Date submitted _____

* Minnesota Open Meeting Law Requirement

OML STUDY TIMELINE – April 2014 to May 2015

APRIL

- Members at the Annual Meeting discuss and approve local study proposed by Mary Santi.
- Members volunteer for the study committee.
- Laurie Beyer-Kropuenske (Community Services Division Director) and Stacie Christensen (Administrator) of the MN Department of Administration's Information Policy Administration Division (IPAD) have previously offered to put together a checklist to survey cities within our area.
- The focus will be on local governments, specifically township/city councils.
- The number of volunteers available will determine how many communities will be studied. Mary Santi will convene the committee.

MAY

- Stacie Christensen of IPAD provides a checklist of the requirements of the Open Meeting Law (OML)

JUNE

- Committee comes together and begins meeting twice a month. Researches OML and cities to cover.

JULY

- Develops meeting study work plan. Begins draft processes for interviewing staff, observing meetings and researching contact information for township/city councils and their elected officials.

AUGUST

- Meets with IPAD staff to review survey and study.
- Presents status report to the WBLA board
- At the Annual Picnic, reports to members and recruits volunteers to research, interview and observe.
- Develops interviewer/observer processes.
- Completes forms for researching interviewing and observing.

SEPTEMBER

- Bear Facts article explains study and recruits volunteers.
- Five minutes during unit meetings for signing up volunteers.
- Researchers begin gathering contact information.

OCTOBER

- Completes pilot interviews in West Lakeland Township, Gem Lake and Centerville.
- Bear Facts "interesting fact" features fact about OML

OML STUDY TIMELINE – April 2014 to May 2015, page 2

NOVEMBER

- Refines survey and interview process. Forms are in final version.
- Presents training session for interviewers and observers.
- Bear Facts continues “interesting fact.”

DECEMBER

- Holiday party, remaining volunteers recruited.
- Develops a table listing volunteers for each community.
- Unit coordinators will activate volunteers, provide survey forms and statement that may be read to the council, and collect forward surveys to database developer.
- Volunteers conduct research, observations and interviews

JANUARY and FEBRUARY

- Volunteers complete and report the balance of research, observations and interviews.
- Interview conducted with Press Publications concerning their experience with OML.
- Bear Facts “interesting fact”

MARCH

- Uploads survey information to DropBox.
- Collates surveys into database, begins analysis
- Bear Facts “interesting fact”

APRIL

- Continues analysis, interpretation and develops executive summary for use as talking points in May unit meetings.
- Presents brief update at Annual Meeting.
- Annual Meeting attendees approve continuing study for a second year

MAY

- Study is the discussion topic at May unit meetings