

# PUBLIC RESOURCE SHEET: THE SUNSHINE ACT – KNOW YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

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## **WHAT IS THE SUNSHINE ACT?**

The Sunshine Act is a law that requires government meetings to be open to the public. It's designed to make sure government decisions that affect your life are made transparently, not in secret. "Government works best when the people can see it working."

## **WHY DOES IT MATTER TO YOU?**

- Democracy Depends on It: You deserve to know how decisions are made about your schools, roads, police, and taxes.
- Transparency = Accountability: When leaders know you're watching, they're more likely to act ethically.
- Your Taxes, Your Say: Meetings often cover budgets, public spending, contracts, and planning that use your money.

## **WHEN DO THESE MEETINGS HAPPEN?**

Government agencies (like school boards or city councils) must post notice of meetings in advance, often on:

- Their official websites
- Local newspapers
- Government buildings
- Community boards

## **WHY YOU SHOULD WATCH FOR NEWS AFTER THESE MEETINGS**

- Important decisions - like tax increases, school closures, or development deals - often happen right after public meetings.

- Local news and watchdog groups will report highlights - stay plugged in.
  - Public comment periods may open or close based on what happens in these meetings.
- Decisions can happen fast. If you miss the meeting, you may miss your chance to act.

### **WHAT TO LOOK FOR:**

- Meeting Agendas - What's being voted on, discussed, or planned
- Public Notices - Dates, times, locations, and access info
- Executive Sessions (Closed) - These are legal exceptions - but should be limited
- Public Comment Opportunities - Your right to speak, submit opinions, or attend virtually

### **FINAL WORD:**

The Sunshine Act is your flashlight. Use it.

Stay informed. Show up. Speak out. Hold power accountable.