

Public Property, Safety, and Works Committee
Monday, January 13, 2025 4:00 PM
Columbus Community Building/Community Room
2500 14 Street
Columbus, NE 68601

The Mayor and City Council reserve the right to go into closed session as per Section 84-1410 of the Nebraska Revised Statutes. A current agenda is on file at City Hall, 2500 14 Street, Columbus, Nebraska. For more information, call 402-562-4224 or visit our website at www.columbusne.us.

{{Name: Agenda Item Name}}

1. Statement of compliance with Open Meetings Act and roll call.

84-1407. Act, how cited.

Sections 84-1407 to 84-1414 shall be known and may be cited as the Open Meetings Act.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 821, § 34.

84-1408. Declaration of intent; meetings open to public.

It is hereby declared to be the policy of this state that the formation of public policy is public business and may not be conducted in secret.

Every meeting of a public body shall be open to the public in order that citizens may exercise their democratic privilege of attending and speaking at meetings of public bodies, except as otherwise provided by the Constitution of Nebraska, federal statutes, and the Open Meetings Act.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 325, § 1; Laws 1996, LB 900, § 1071; Laws 2004, LB 821, § 35.

Annotations

- Nebraska's public meetings laws do not apply to school board deliberations pertaining solely to disputed adjudicative facts. *McQuinn v. Douglas Cty. Sch. Dist. No. 66*, 259 Neb. 720, 612 N.W.2d 198 (2000).
- The primary purpose of the public meetings law is to ensure that public policy is formulated at open meetings. *Marks v. Judicial Nominating Comm.*, 236 Neb. 429, 461 N.W.2d 551 (1990).
- The public meetings law is broadly interpreted and liberally construed to obtain the objective of openness in favor of the public, and provisions permitting closed sessions must be narrowly and strictly construed. *Grein v. Board of Education of Fremont*, 216 Neb. 158, 343 N.W.2d 718 (1984).
- Although a committee was a subcommittee of a natural resources district board, it was not subject to the Open Meetings Act because there was never a quorum of board members in attendance and the committee did not hold hearings, make policy, or take formal action on behalf of the board. *Koch v. Lower Loup NRD*, 27 Neb. App. 301, 931 N.W.2d 160 (2019).
- A county board of equalization is a public body whose meetings shall be open to the public. *Wolf v. Grubbs*, 17 Neb. App. 292, 759 N.W.2d 499 (2009).

84-1409. Terms, defined.

For purposes of the Open Meetings Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1)(a) Public body means (i) governing bodies of all political subdivisions of the State of Nebraska, (ii) governing bodies of all agencies, created by the Constitution of Nebraska, statute, or otherwise pursuant to law, of the executive department of the State of Nebraska, (iii) all independent boards, commissions, bureaus, committees, councils, subunits, or any other bodies created by the Constitution of Nebraska, statute, or otherwise pursuant to law, (iv) all study or advisory committees of the executive department of the State of Nebraska whether having continuing existence or appointed as special committees with limited existence, (v) advisory committees of the bodies referred to in subdivisions (i), (ii), and (iii) of this subdivision, and (vi) instrumentalities exercising essentially public functions; and

(b) Public body does not include (i) subcommittees of such bodies unless a quorum of the public body attends a subcommittee meeting or unless such subcommittees are holding hearings, making policy, or taking formal action on behalf of their parent body, except that all meetings of any subcommittee established under section 81-15,175 are subject to the Open Meetings Act, (ii) entities conducting judicial proceedings unless a court or other judicial body is exercising rulemaking authority, deliberating, or deciding upon the issuance of administrative orders, and (iii) the Judicial Resources Commission or subcommittees or subgroups of the commission;

(2) Meeting means all regular, special, or called meetings, formal or informal, of any public body for the purposes of briefing, discussion of public business, formation of tentative policy, or the taking of any action of the public body; and

(3) Virtual conferencing means conducting or participating in a meeting electronically or telephonically with interaction among the participants subject to subsection (2) of section 84-1412.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 325, § 2; Laws 1983, LB 43, § 1; Laws 1989, LB 429, § 42; Laws 1989, LB 311, § 14; Laws 1992, LB 1019, § 124; Laws 1993, LB 635, § 1; Laws 1996, LB 1044, § 978; Laws 1997, LB 798, § 37; Laws 2004, LB 821, § 36; Laws 2007, LB296, § 810; Laws 2011, LB366, § 2; Laws 2021, LB83, § 11; Laws 2022, LB922, § 12.

Annotations

- A township is a political subdivision, and as such, a township board is subject to the provisions of the public meetings laws. *Steenblock v. Elkhorn Township Bd.*, 245 Neb. 722, 515 N.W.2d 128 (1994).
- A county agricultural society is a public body to which the provisions of the Nebraska public meetings law are applicable. *Nixon v. Madison Co. Ag. Soc'y*, 217 Neb. 37, 348 N.W.2d 119 (1984).
- Failure by a public governing body, as defined under section 84-1409, R.R.S.1943, to take and record a roll call vote on an action, as required by section 84-1413(2), R.S.Supp.,1980, grants any citizen the right to sue for the purpose of having the action declared void. In this case such failure could not be later corrected by a nunc pro tunc order because there was no showing that a roll call vote on the disputed action was actually taken, and even if it was the record showed it was not recorded until over a year later. Sections 23-1301, R.R.S.1943, and 23-1302, R.R.S.1943, make it the duty of the county clerk to record proceedings of the board of county commissioners. *State ex rel. Schuler v. Dunbar*, 208 Neb. 69, 302 N.W.2d 674 (1981).
- Although a committee was a subcommittee of a natural resources district board, it was not subject to the Open Meetings Act because there was never a quorum of board members in attendance and the committee did not hold hearings, make policy, or take formal action on behalf of the board. *Koch v. Lower Loup NRD*, 27 Neb. App. 301, 931 N.W.2d 160 (2019).
- Although the Open Meetings Act does not define "subcommittee," a subcommittee is generally defined as a group within a committee to which the committee may refer business. *Koch v. Lower Loup NRD*, 27 Neb. App. 301, 931 N.W.2d 160 (2019).
- The Open Meetings Act does not require policymakers to remain ignorant of the issues they must decide until the moment the public is invited to comment on a proposed policy. By excluding nonquorum subgroups from the definition of a public body, the Legislature

has balanced the public's need to be heard on matters of public policy with a practical accommodation for a public body's need for information to conduct business. *Koch v. Lower Loup NRD*, 27 Neb. App. 301, 931 N.W.2d 160 (2019).

- As an administrative agency of the county, a county board of equalization is a public body. *Wolf v. Grubbs*, 17 Neb. App. 292, 759 N.W.2d 499 (2009).
- The electors of a township at their annual meeting are a public body under the Open Meetings Act. *State ex rel. Newman v. Columbus Township Bd.*, 15 Neb. App. 656, 735 N.W.2d 399 (2007).
- The meeting at issue in this case was a "meeting" within the parameters of subsection (2) of this section because it involved the discussion of public business, the formation of tentative policy, or the taking of any action of the public power district. *Hansmeyer v. Nebraska Pub. Power Dist.*, 6 Neb. App. 889, 578 N.W.2d 476 (1998).
- Informational sessions in which the governmental body hears reports are briefings. *Johnson v. Nebraska Environmental Control Council*, 2 Neb. App. 263, 509 N.W.2d 21 (1993).

84-1410. Closed session; when; purpose; reasons listed; procedure; right to challenge; prohibited acts; chance meetings, conventions, or workshops.

(1) Any public body may hold a closed session by the affirmative vote of a majority of its voting members if a closed session is clearly necessary for the protection of the public interest or for the prevention of needless injury to the reputation of an individual and if such individual has not requested a public meeting. The subject matter and the reason necessitating the closed session shall be identified in the motion to close. Closed sessions may be held for, but shall not be limited to, such reasons as:

(a) Strategy sessions with respect to collective bargaining, real estate purchases, pending litigation, or litigation which is imminent as evidenced by communication of a claim or threat of litigation to or by the public body;

(b) Discussion regarding deployment of security personnel or devices;

(c) Investigative proceedings regarding allegations of criminal misconduct;

(d) Evaluation of the job performance of a person when necessary to prevent needless injury to the reputation of a person and if such person has not requested a public meeting;

(e) For the Community Trust created under section 81-1801.02, discussion regarding the amounts to be paid to individuals who have suffered from a tragedy of violence or natural disaster; or

(f) For public hospitals, governing board peer review activities, professional review activities, review and discussion of medical staff investigations or disciplinary actions, and any strategy session concerning transactional negotiations with any referral source that is required by federal law to be conducted at arms length.

Nothing in this section shall permit a closed meeting for discussion of the appointment or election of a new member to any public body.

(2) The vote to hold a closed session shall be taken in open session. The entire motion, the vote of each member on the question of holding a closed session, and the time when the closed session commenced and concluded shall be recorded in the minutes. If the motion to close

passes, then the presiding officer immediately prior to the closed session shall restate on the record the limitation of the subject matter of the closed session. The public body holding such a closed session shall restrict its consideration of matters during the closed portions to only those purposes set forth in the motion to close as the reason for the closed session. The meeting shall be reconvened in open session before any formal action may be taken. For purposes of this section, formal action shall mean a collective decision or a collective commitment or promise to make a decision on any question, motion, proposal, resolution, order, or ordinance or formation of a position or policy but shall not include negotiating guidance given by members of the public body to legal counsel or other negotiators in closed sessions authorized under subdivision (1)(a) of this section.

(3) Any member of any public body shall have the right to challenge the continuation of a closed session if the member determines that the session has exceeded the reason stated in the original motion to hold a closed session or if the member contends that the closed session is neither clearly necessary for (a) the protection of the public interest or (b) the prevention of needless injury to the reputation of an individual. Such challenge shall be overruled only by a majority vote of the members of the public body. Such challenge and its disposition shall be recorded in the minutes.

(4) Nothing in this section shall be construed to require that any meeting be closed to the public. No person or public body shall fail to invite a portion of its members to a meeting, and no public body shall designate itself a subcommittee of the whole body for the purpose of circumventing the Open Meetings Act. No closed session, informal meeting, chance meeting, social gathering, email, fax, or other electronic communication shall be used for the purpose of circumventing the requirements of the act.

(5) The act does not apply to chance meetings or to attendance at or travel to conventions or workshops of members of a public body at which there is no meeting of the body then intentionally convened, if there is no vote or other action taken regarding any matter over which the public body has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 325, § 3; Laws 1983, LB 43, § 2; Laws 1985, LB 117, § 1; Laws 1992, LB 1019, § 125; Laws 1994, LB 621, § 1; Laws 1996, LB 900, § 1072; Laws 2004, LB 821, § 37; Laws 2004, LB 1179, § 1; Laws 2006, LB 898, § 1; Laws 2011, LB390, § 29; Laws 2012, LB995, § 17.

Annotations

- There is no absolute discovery privilege for communications that occur during a closed session. *State ex rel. Upper Republican NRD v. District Judges*, 273 Neb. 148, 728 N.W.2d 275 (2007).
- If a person present at a meeting observes a public meetings law violation in the form of an improper closed session and fails to object, that person waives his or her right to object at a later date. *Wasikowski v. Nebraska Quality Jobs Bd.*, 264 Neb. 403, 648 N.W.2d 756 (2002).
- The public interest mentioned in this section is that shared by citizens in general and by the community at large concerning pecuniary or legal rights and liabilities. *Grein v. Board of Education*, 216 Neb. 158, 343 N.W.2d 718 (1984).
- Hearing in closed executive session was contrary to this section since there was no showing of necessity or reason under subdivision (1)(a), (b), or (c), but did not result in reversal of board decision. *Simonds v. Board of Examiners*, 213 Neb. 259, 329 N.W.2d 92

(1983).

- Negotiations for the purchase of land need not be conducted at an open meeting but the deliberations of a city council as to whether an offer to purchase real estate should be made should take place in an open meeting. *Pokorny v. City of Schuyler*, 202 Neb. 334, 275 N.W.2d 281 (1979).
- Public meeting law was not violated where the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska voted to hold a closed session to consider the university president's resignation, and also discussed the appointment of an interim president during such session. *Meyer v. Board of Regents*, 1 Neb. App. 893, 510 N.W.2d 450 (1993).

84-1411. Meetings of public body; notice; method; contents; when available; right to modify; duties concerning notice; virtual conferencing authorized; requirements; emergency meeting without notice; appearance before public body; applicability of section.

(1) Until January 1, 2025:

(a) Except as provided in subsection (10) of this section, each public body shall give reasonable advance publicized notice of the time and place of each meeting as provided in this subsection. Such notice shall be transmitted to all members of the public body and to the public.

(b)(i) Except as provided in subdivision (1)(b)(ii) of this section, in the case of a public body described in subdivision (1)(a)(i) of section 84-1409 or such body's advisory committee, such notice shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction and, if available, on such newspaper's website.

(ii) In the case of the governing body of a city of the second class or village or such body's advisory committee or the governing body of a rural or suburban fire protection district, such notice shall be published by:

(A) Publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction and, if available, on such newspaper's website; or

(B) Posting written notice in three conspicuous public places in such city, village, or district. Such notice shall be posted in the same three places for each meeting.

(iii) In the case of a public body not described in subdivision (1)(b)(i) or (ii) of this section, such notice shall be given by a method designated by the public body.

(iv) In case of refusal, neglect, or inability of the newspaper to timely publish the notice, the public body shall (A) post such notice on its website, if available, and (B) post such notice in a conspicuous public place in such public body's jurisdiction. The public body shall keep a written record of such posting. The record of such posting shall be evidence that such posting was done as required and shall be sufficient to fulfill the requirement of publication.

(c) In addition to a method of notice required by subdivision (1)(b)(i) or (ii) of this section, such notice may also be provided by any other appropriate method designated by such public body or such advisory committee.

(d) Each public body shall record the methods and dates of such notice in its minutes.

(e) 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 (i) twenty-four hours before the scheduled commencement of the meeting or (ii) 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) Beginning January 1, 2025:

(a) Except as provided in subsection (10) of this section, each public body shall give reasonable advance publicized notice of the time and place of each meeting as provided in this subsection. Such notice shall be transmitted to all members of the public body and to the public.

(b)(i) Except as provided in subdivision (2)(b)(ii) of this section, in the case of a public body described in subdivision (1)(a)(i) of section 84-1409 or such body's advisory committees, such notice shall be given by:

(A)(I) Publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction that is finalized for printing prior to the time and date of the meeting, (II) posting on such newspaper's website, if available, and (III) posting on a statewide website established and maintained as a repository for such notices by a majority of Nebraska newspapers. Such notice shall be placed in the newspaper and on the websites by the newspaper; or

(B)(I) Posting to the newspaper's website, if available, and (II) posting to a statewide website established and maintained as a repository for such notices by a majority of Nebraska newspapers if no edition of a newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction is to be finalized for printing prior to the time and date of the meeting. Such notice shall be placed in the newspaper and on the websites by the newspaper.

(ii) In the case of the governing body of a city of the second class or village, any advisory committee of such governing body, or the governing body of a rural or suburban fire protection district, such notice shall be given by:

(A)(I) Publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction that is finalized for printing prior to the time and date of the meeting, (II) posting on such newspaper's website, if available, and (III) posting on a statewide website established and maintained as a repository for such notices by a majority of Nebraska newspapers. Such notice shall be placed in the newspaper and on the websites by the newspaper;

(B)(I) Posting to the newspaper's website, if available, and (II) posting on a statewide website established and maintained as a repository for such notices by a majority of Nebraska newspapers if no edition of a newspaper of general circulation within the public body's jurisdiction is to be finalized for printing prior to the time and date of the meeting. Such notice shall be placed in the newspaper and on the websites by the newspaper; or

(C) Posting written notice in three conspicuous public places in such city, village, or district. Such notice shall be posted by the public body in the same three places for each meeting.

(iii) In the case of a public body not described in subdivision (2)(b)(i) or (ii) of this section, such notice shall be given by a method designated by the public body.

(iv) In case of refusal, neglect, or inability of the newspaper to publish the notice, the public

body shall (A) post such notice on its website, if available, (B) submit a post on a statewide website established and maintained as a repository for such notices by a majority of Nebraska newspapers, and (C) post such notice in a conspicuous public place in such public body's jurisdiction. The public body shall keep a written record of such posting. The record of such posting shall be evidence that such posting was done as required and shall be sufficient to fulfill the requirement of publication.

(3)(a) The following entities may hold a meeting by means of virtual conferencing if the requirements of subdivision (3)(b) of this section are met:

(i) A state agency, state board, state commission, state council, or state committee, or an advisory committee of any such state entity;

(ii) An organization, including the governing body, created under the Interlocal Cooperation Act, the Joint Public Agency Act, or the Municipal Cooperative Financing Act;

(iii) The governing body of a public power district having a chartered territory of more than one county in this state;

(iv) The governing body of a public power and irrigation district having a chartered territory of more than one county in this state;

(v) An educational service unit;

(vi) The Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council;

(vii) An organization, including the governing body, of a risk management pool or its advisory committees organized in accordance with the Intergovernmental Risk Management Act;

(viii) A community college board of governors;

(ix) The Nebraska Brand Committee;

(x) A local public health department;

(xi) A metropolitan utilities district;

(xii) A regional metropolitan transit authority; and

(xiii) A natural resources district.

(b) The requirements for holding a meeting by means of virtual conferencing are as follows:

(i) Reasonable advance publicized notice is given as provided in subsections (1) and (2) of this section, including providing access to a dial-in number or link to the virtual conference;

(ii) In addition to the public's right to participate by virtual conferencing, reasonable arrangements are made to accommodate the public's right to attend at a physical site and participate as provided in section 84-1412, including reasonable seating, in at least one designated site in a building open to the public and identified in the notice, with: At least one member of the entity holding such meeting, or his or her designee, present at each site; a recording of the hearing by audio or visual recording devices; and a reasonable opportunity for input, such as public comment or questions, is provided to at least the same extent as would be

provided if virtual conferencing was not used;

(iii) At least one copy of all documents being considered at the meeting is available at any physical site open to the public where individuals may attend the virtual conference. The public body shall also provide links to an electronic copy of the agenda, all documents being considered at the meeting, and the current version of the Open Meetings Act; and

(iv) Except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, subsection (1) of section 70-1014, subsection (2) of section 70-1014.02, or subsection (4) of section 79-2204, no more than one-half of the meetings of the state entities, advisory committees, boards, councils, organizations, or governing bodies are held by virtual conferencing in a calendar year. In the case of (A) an organization created under the Interlocal Cooperation Act that sells electricity or natural gas, (B) an organization created under the Municipal Cooperative Financing Act, (C) a governing body of a risk management pool and any advisory committee of such governing body, or (D) any advisory committee of any state entity created in response to the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Act, such organization, governing body, or committee may hold more than one-half of its meetings by virtual conferencing if such organization holds at least one meeting each calendar year that is not by virtual conferencing.

(4) Virtual conferencing, emails, faxes, or other electronic communication shall not be used to circumvent any of the public government purposes established in the Open Meetings Act.

(5) 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.

(6) 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 virtual conferencing. The provisions of subsection (5) 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.

(7) A public body may allow a member of the public or any other witness to appear before the public body by means of virtual conferencing.

(8)(a) Notwithstanding subsections (3) and (6) of this section, if an emergency is declared by the Governor pursuant to the Emergency Management Act as defined in section 81-829.39, a public body the territorial jurisdiction of which is included in the emergency declaration, in whole or in part, may hold a meeting by virtual conferencing during such emergency if the public body gives reasonable advance publicized notice as described in subsections (1) and (2) of this section. The notice shall include information regarding access for the public and news media. In addition to any formal action taken pertaining to the emergency, the public body may hold such meeting for the purpose of briefing, discussion of public business, formation of tentative policy, or the taking of any action by the public body.

(b) The public body shall provide access by providing a dial-in number or a link to the virtual conference. The public body shall also provide links to an electronic copy of the agenda, all documents being considered at the meeting, and the current version of the Open Meetings Act. Reasonable arrangements shall be made to accommodate the public's right to hear and speak at

the meeting and record the meeting. Subsection (5) of this section shall be complied with in conducting such meetings.

(c) The nature of the emergency shall be stated in the minutes. Complete minutes of such meeting specifying the nature of the emergency and any formal action taken at the meeting shall be made available for inspection as provided in subsection (5) of section 84-1413.

(9) In addition to any other statutory authorization for virtual conferencing, any public body not listed in subdivision (3)(a) of this section may hold a meeting by virtual conferencing if:

(a) The purpose of the virtual meeting is to discuss items that are scheduled to be discussed or acted upon at a subsequent non-virtual open meeting of the public body;

(b) No action is taken by the public body at the virtual meeting; and

(c) The public body complies with subdivisions (3)(b)(i) and (ii) of this section.

(10) This section does not apply to a meeting of the Nebraska Power Review Board or a public power district, a public power and irrigation district, an electric membership association, an electric cooperative company, a municipality having a generation and distribution system, or a registered group of municipalities if such meeting is subject to section 70-1034.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 325, § 4; Laws 1983, LB 43, § 3; Laws 1987, LB 663, § 25; Laws 1993, LB 635, § 2; Laws 1996, LB 469, § 6; Laws 1996, LB 1161, § 1; Laws 1999, LB 47, § 2; Laws 1999, LB 87, § 100; Laws 1999, LB 461, § 1; Laws 2000, LB 968, § 85; Laws 2004, LB 821, § 38; Laws 2004, LB 1179, § 2; Laws 2006, LB 898, § 2; Laws 2007, LB199, § 9; Laws 2009, LB361, § 2; Laws 2012, LB735, § 1; Laws 2013, LB510, § 1; Laws 2017, LB318, § 1; Laws 2019, LB212, § 5; Laws 2020, LB148, § 3; Laws 2021, LB83, § 12; Laws 2022, LB742, § 1; Laws 2022, LB908, § 1; Laws 2022, LB922, § 13; Laws 2024, LB287, § 74; Laws 2024, LB399, § 4; Laws 2024, LB1370, § 8.

Note: The Revisor of Statutes has pursuant to section 49-769 correlated LB287, section 74, with LB399, section 4, and LB1370, section 8, to reflect all amendments.

Note: Changes made by LB287 became operative April 17, 2024. Changes made by LB399 became effective July 19, 2024. Changes made by LB1370 became operative July 19, 2024.

Cross References

- **Emergency Management Act**, see section 81-829.36.
- **Intergovernmental Risk Management Act**, see section 44-4301.
- **Interlocal Cooperation Act**, see section 13-801.
- **Joint Public Agency Act**, see section 13-2501.
- **Municipal Cooperative Financing Act**, see section 18-2401.
- **Opioid Prevention and Treatment Act**, see section 71-2485.

Annotations

- Under subsection (1) of this section, the Legislature has imposed only two conditions on

the public body's notification method of a public meeting: (1) It must give reasonable advance publicized notice of the time and place of each meeting and (2) it must be recorded in the public body's minutes. *City of Elkhorn v. City of Omaha*, 272 Neb. 867, 725 N.W.2d 792 (2007).

- An emergency is "(a)ny event or occasional combination of circumstances which calls for immediate action or remedy; pressing necessity; exigency; a sudden or unexpected happening; an unforeseen occurrence or condition." *Steenblock v. Elkhorn Township Bd.*, 245 Neb. 722, 515 N.W.2d 128 (1994).
- An agenda which gives reasonable notice of the matters to be considered at a meeting of a city council complies with the requirements of this section. *Pokorny v. City of Schuyler*, 202 Neb. 334, 275 N.W.2d 281 (1979).
- When notice is required, a notice of a special meeting of a city council posted in three public places at 10:00 p.m. on the day preceding the meeting is not reasonable advance publicized notice of a meeting as is required by this section. *Pokorny v. City of Schuyler*, 202 Neb. 334, 275 N.W.2d 281 (1979).
- Teacher waived right to object to lack of public notice in board of education employment hearing by voluntary participation in the hearing without objection. *Alexander v. School Dist. No. 17*, 197 Neb. 251, 248 N.W.2d 335 (1976).
- A county board of commissioners and a county board of equalization are not required to give separate notices when the notice states only the time and place that the boards meet and directs a citizen to where the agendas for each board can be found. *Wolf v. Grubbs*, 17 Neb. App. 292, 759 N.W.2d 499 (2009).
- A county board of equalization is a public body which is required to give advanced publicized notice of its meetings. *Wolf v. Grubbs*, 17 Neb. App. 292, 759 N.W.2d 499 (2009).
- Notice of recessed and reconvened meetings must be given in the same fashion as the original meeting. *Wolf v. Grubbs*, 17 Neb. App. 292, 759 N.W.2d 499 (2009).
- True notice of a meeting is not given by burying such in the minutes of a prior board proceeding. *Wolf v. Grubbs*, 17 Neb. App. 292, 759 N.W.2d 499 (2009).
- An agenda notice which merely stated "work order reports" was an inadequate notice under this section because it did not give interested persons knowledge that plans for a 345 kv transmission line through the district was going to be discussed and voted upon at the meeting. Inadequate agenda notice under this section meant there was a substantial violation of the public meeting laws; however, later actions by the board of directors cured the defects in notice, and such actions were in substantial compliance with the statute. *Hansmeyer v. Nebraska Pub. Power Dist.*, 6 Neb. App. 889, 578 N.W.2d 476 (1998).

84-1412. Meetings of public body; rights of public; public body; powers and duties.

(1) Subject to the Open Meetings Act, the public has the right to attend and the right to speak at meetings of public bodies, and all or any part of a meeting of a public body, except for closed sessions called pursuant to section 84-1410, may be videotaped, televised, photographed, broadcast, or recorded by any person in attendance by means of a tape recorder, a camera, video equipment, or any other means of pictorial or sonic reproduction or in writing. Except for closed sessions called pursuant to section 84-1410, a public body shall allow members of the public an opportunity to speak at each meeting.

(2) It shall not be a violation of subsection (1) of this section for any public body to make and enforce reasonable rules and regulations regarding the conduct of persons attending, speaking at, videotaping, televising, photographing, broadcasting, or recording its meetings, including meetings held by virtual conferencing.

(3) No public body shall require members of the public to identify themselves as a condition for admission to the meeting nor shall such body require that the name of any member of the public be placed on the agenda prior to such meeting in order to speak about items on the agenda. The body shall require any member of the public desiring to address the body to identify himself or herself, including an address and the name of any organization represented by such person unless the address requirement is waived to protect the security of the individual.

(4) No public body shall, for the purpose of circumventing the Open Meetings Act, hold a meeting in a place known by the body to be too small to accommodate the anticipated audience.

(5) No public body shall be deemed in violation of this section if it holds its meeting in its traditional meeting place which is located in this state.

(6) No public body shall be deemed in violation of this section if it holds a meeting outside of this state if, but only if:

(a) A member entity of the public body is located outside of this state and the meeting is in that member's jurisdiction;

(b) All out-of-state locations identified in the notice are located within public buildings used by members of the entity or at a place which will accommodate the anticipated audience;

(c) Reasonable arrangements are made to accommodate the public's right to attend, hear, and speak at the meeting, including making virtual conferencing available at an in-state location to members, the public, or the press, if requested twenty-four hours in advance;

(d) No more than twenty-five percent of the public body's meetings in a calendar year are held out-of-state;

(e) Out-of-state meetings are not used to circumvent any of the public government purposes established in the Open Meetings Act; and

(f) The public body publishes notice of the out-of-state meeting at least twenty-one days before the date of the meeting in a legal newspaper of statewide circulation.

(7) Each public body shall, upon request, make a reasonable effort to accommodate the public's right to hear the discussion and testimony presented at a meeting.

(8) Public bodies shall make available at the meeting or the in-state location for virtual conferencing as required by subdivision (6)(c) of this section, for examination and copying by members of the public, at least one copy of all reproducible written material to be discussed at an open meeting, either in paper or electronic form. Public bodies shall make available at least one current copy of the Open Meetings Act posted in the meeting room at a location accessible to members of the public. At the beginning of the meeting, the public shall be informed about the location of the posted information.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 325, § 5; Laws 1983, LB 43, § 4; Laws 1985, LB 117, § 2; Laws 1987, LB 324, § 5; Laws 1996, LB 900, § 1073; Laws 2001, LB 250, § 2; Laws 2004, LB 821, § 39; Laws 2006, LB 898, § 3; Laws 2008, LB962, § 1; Laws 2021, LB83, § 13; Laws 2024, LB43, § 21.

Operative Date: July 19, 2024

Annotations

- To preserve an objection that a public body failed to make documents available at a public meeting as required by subsection (8) of this section, a person who attends a public meeting must not only object to the violation, but must make that objection to the public body or to a member of the public body. *Stoetzel & Sons v. City of Hastings*, 265 Neb. 637, 658 N.W.2d 636 (2003).

84-1413. Meetings; minutes; roll call vote; secret ballot; when; agenda and minutes; required on website; when.

(1) Each public body shall keep minutes of all meetings showing the time, place, members present and absent, and the substance of all matters discussed.

(2) Any action taken on any question or motion duly moved and seconded shall be by roll call vote of the public body in open session, and the record shall state how each member voted or if the member was absent or not voting. The requirements of a roll call or viva voce vote shall be satisfied by a public body which utilizes an electronic voting device which allows the yeas and nays of each member of such public body to be readily seen by the public.

(3) The vote to elect leadership within a public body may be taken by secret ballot, but the total number of votes for each candidate shall be recorded in the minutes.

(4) The minutes of all meetings and evidence and documentation received or disclosed in open session shall be public records and open to public inspection during normal business hours.

(5) Minutes shall be written or kept as an electronic record and shall be available for inspection within ten working days or prior to the next convened meeting, whichever occurs earlier, except that cities of the second class and villages may have an additional ten working days if the employee responsible for writing or keeping the minutes is absent due to a serious illness or emergency.

(6) Beginning July 31, 2022, the governing body of a natural resources district, the city council of a city of the metropolitan class, the city council of a city of the primary class, the city council of a city of the first class, the county board of a county with a population greater than twenty-five thousand inhabitants, and the school board of a school district shall make available on such entity's public website the agenda and minutes of any meeting of the governing body. The agenda shall be placed on the website at least twenty-four hours before the meeting of the governing body. Minutes shall be placed on the website at such time as the minutes are available for inspection as provided in subsection (5) of this section. This information shall be available on the public website for at least six months.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 325, § 6; Laws 1978, LB 609, § 3; Laws 1979, LB 86, § 9; Laws 1987, LB 663, § 26; Laws 2005, LB 501, § 1; Laws 2009, LB361, § 3; Laws 2015, LB365, § 2; Laws 2016, LB876, § 1; Laws 2021, LB83, § 14; Laws 2022, LB742, § 2.

Annotations

- Under prior law, if a person present at a meeting observes and fails to object to an alleged public meetings laws violation in the form of a failure to conduct rollcall votes before

taking actions on questions or motions pending, that person waives his or her right to object at a later date. *Hauser v. Nebraska Police Stds. Adv. Council*, 264 Neb. 944, 653 N.W.2d 240 (2002).

- Subsection (2) of this section does not require the record to state that the vote was by roll call, but requires only that the record show if and how each member voted. Neither does the statute set a time limit for recording the results of a vote, after which no corrections of the record can be made. If no intervening rights of third persons have arisen, a board of county commissioners has power to correct the record of the proceedings had at a previous meeting so as to make them speak the truth, particularly where the correction supplies some omitted fact or action and is done not to contradict or change the original record but to have the record show that a certain action was taken or thing done, which the original record fails to show. *State ex rel. Schuler v. Dunbar*, 214 Neb. 85, 333 N.W.2d 652 (1983).
- Failure by a public governing body, as defined under section 84-1409, R.R.S.1943, to take and record a roll call vote on an action, as required by section 84-1413(2), R.S.Supp.,1980, grants any citizen the right to sue for the purpose of having the action declared void. In this case such failure could not be later corrected by a nunc pro tunc order because there was no showing that a roll call vote on the disputed action was actually taken, and even if it was the record showed it was not recorded until over a year later. Sections 23-1301, R.R.S.1943, and 23-1302, R.R.S.1943, make it the duty of the county clerk to record proceedings of the board of county commissioners. *State ex rel. Schuler v. Dunbar*, 208 Neb. 69, 302 N.W.2d 674 (1981).
- There is no requirement that a public body make a record of where notice was published or posted. *Wolf v. Grubbs*, 17 Neb. App. 292, 759 N.W.2d 499 (2009).

84-1414. Unlawful action by public body; declared void or voidable by district court; when; duty to enforce open meeting laws; citizen's suit; procedure; violations; penalties.

(1) Any motion, resolution, rule, regulation, ordinance, or formal action of a public body made or taken in violation of the Open Meetings Act shall be declared void by the district court if the suit is commenced within one hundred twenty days of the meeting of the public body at which the alleged violation occurred. Any motion, resolution, rule, regulation, ordinance, or formal action of a public body made or taken in substantial violation of the Open Meetings Act shall be voidable by the district court if the suit is commenced more than one hundred twenty days after but within one year of the meeting of the public body in which the alleged violation occurred. A suit to void any final action shall be commenced within one year of the action.

(2) The Attorney General and the county attorney of the county in which the public body ordinarily meets shall enforce the Open Meetings Act.

(3) Any citizen of this state may commence a suit in the district court of the county in which the public body ordinarily meets or in which the plaintiff resides for the purpose of requiring compliance with or preventing violations of the Open Meetings Act, for the purpose of declaring an action of a public body void, or for the purpose of determining the applicability of the act to discussions or decisions of the public body. It shall not be a defense that the citizen attended the meeting and failed to object at such time. The court may order payment of reasonable attorney's fees and court costs to a successful plaintiff in a suit brought under this section.

(4) Any member of a public body who knowingly violates or conspires to violate or who attends or remains at a meeting knowing that the public body is in violation of any provision of the Open Meetings Act shall be guilty of a Class IV misdemeanor for a first offense and a Class III misdemeanor for a second or subsequent offense.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 325, § 9; Laws 1977, LB 39, § 318; Laws 1983, LB 43, § 5; Laws 1992, LB 1019, § 126; Laws 1994, LB 621, § 2; Laws 1996, LB 900, § 1074; Laws 2004, LB 821, § 40; Laws 2006, LB 898, § 4.

Annotations

- The Legislature has granted standing to a broad scope of its citizens for the very limited purpose of challenging meetings allegedly in violation of the Open Meetings Act, so that they may help police the public policy embodied by the act. *Schauer v. Grooms*, 280 Neb. 426, 786 N.W.2d 909 (2010).
- Any citizen of the state may commence an action to declare a public body's action void. *City of Elkhorn v. City of Omaha*, 272 Neb. 867, 725 N.W.2d 792 (2007).
- The reading of ordinances constitutes a formal action under subsection (1) of this section. *City of Elkhorn v. City of Omaha*, 272 Neb. 867, 725 N.W.2d 792 (2007).
- If a person present at a meeting observes a public meetings law violation in the form of an improper closed session and fails to object, that person waives his or her right to object at a later date. *Wasikowski v. Nebraska Quality Jobs Bd.*, 264 Neb. 403, 648 N.W.2d 756 (2002).
- Under the Public Meetings Act, a county lacks capacity to maintain an action to declare its official conduct "void" for noncompliance with the act. *County of York v. Johnson*, 230 Neb. 403, 432 N.W.2d 215 (1988).
- When a petitioner under this section is successful in the district court, that court may allow attorney fees. *Tracy Corp. II v. Nebraska Pub. Serv. Comm.*, 218 Neb. 900, 360 N.W.2d 485 (1984).
- Informal discussions between the Tax Commissioner and the State Board of Equalization in which instructions were clarified, with such clarification leading to the amendment of hearing notices, did not constitute a public meeting subject to the provisions of this section. *Box Butte County v. State Board of Equalization and Assessment*, 206 Neb. 696, 295 N.W.2d 670 (1980).
- The right to collaterally attack an order made in contravention of the Public Meeting Act must occur within a period of one year as is specifically provided by this section. *Witt v. School District No. 70*, 202 Neb. 63, 273 N.W.2d 669 (1979).
- Statutory change, requiring "publicized notice" for board of education employment hearings, occurring between dates meeting scheduled and conducted, held not to void proceedings. *Alexander v. School Dist. No. 17*, 197 Neb. 251, 248 N.W.2d 335 (1976).
- Voiding an entire meeting is a proper remedy for violations of the Open Meetings Act. Once a meeting has been declared void pursuant to Nebraska's public meetings law, board members are prohibited from considering any information obtained at the illegal meeting. *Wolf v. Grubbs*, 17 Neb. App. 292, 759 N.W.2d 499 (2009).
- Actions by the board of directors were merely voidable under this section, and not void. Pursuant to subsection (3) of this section, the plaintiffs were awarded partial attorney fees because they were successful in having the court declare that the board of directors was in substantial violation of the statute, even though the plaintiffs did not get the relief requested of having the board's actions declared void. *Hansmeyer v. Nebraska Pub. Power Dist.*, 6 Neb. App. 889, 578 N.W.2d 476 (1998).

2. Policies and Procedures Manual for Columbus Community Building.



City of Columbus
Human Resources / Risk Management
2500 14th St. Suite 3
Columbus, NE 68601
402-562-4243
www.columbusne.us

DATE: December 12, 2024
TO: Tara Vasicek, City Administrator *T.V.*
FROM: Tammy Orender, Human Resource Director *T.O.*
RE: Columbus Community Building Policies & Procedures

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Policies and Procedures manual for the Community Building

DISCUSSION:

Over the past year, the Community Building Stewards have convened to implement policies and procedures to ensure the effective management and use of the Community Building. These efforts were aimed at improving safety, efficiency and the overall functionality of the building.

Columbus Community Building Policies & Procedures



Adopted January 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1:

Standard Response Procedure Overview – Pages 3-9

Tips on Possible Situations – Pages 10-12

PART 2:

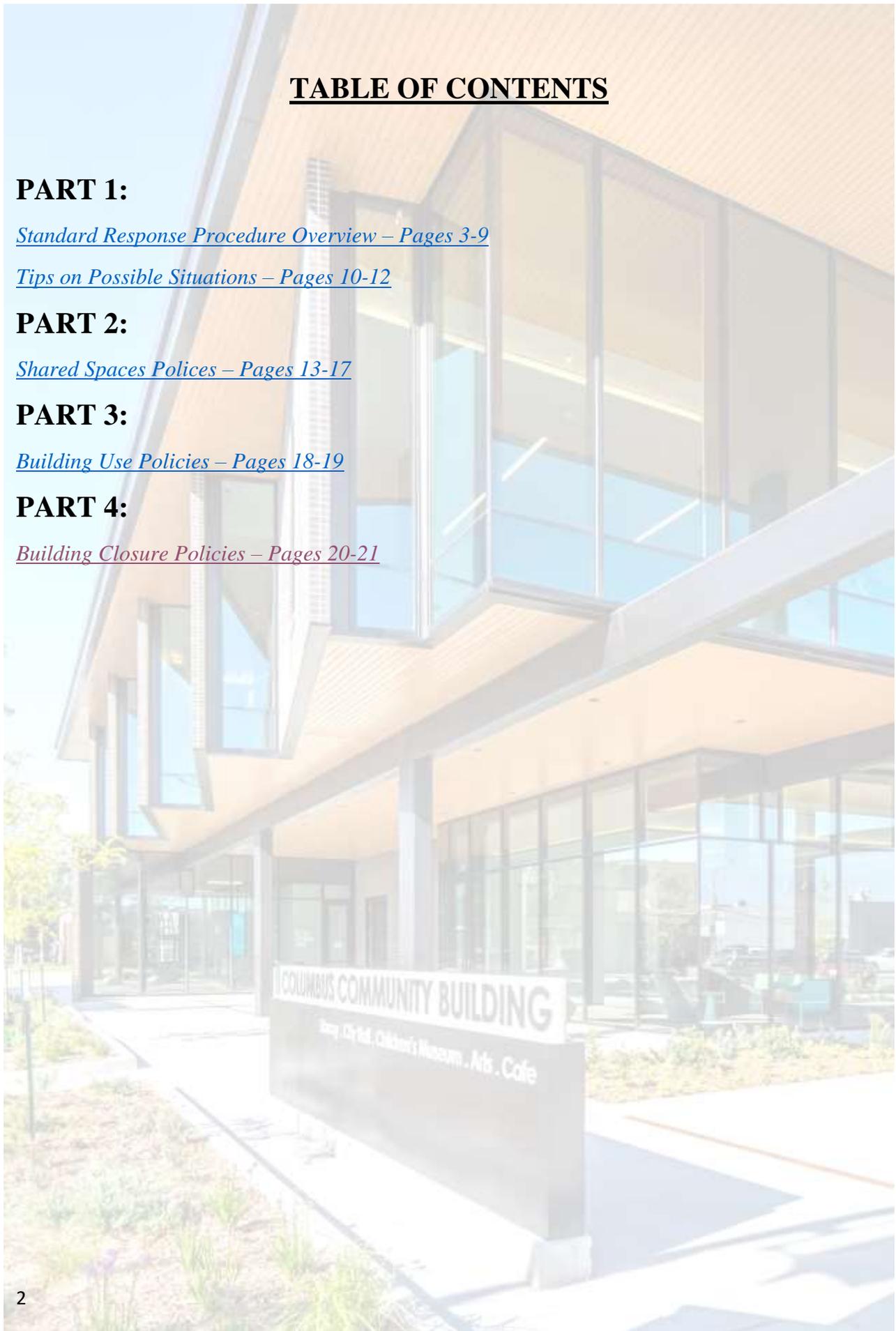
Shared Spaces Policies – Pages 13-17

PART 3:

Building Use Policies – Pages 18-19

PART 4:

Building Closure Policies – Pages 20-21



STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOL OVERVIEW

The safety and security of employees and visitors to the Columbus Community Building is of the utmost importance. The Standard Response Protocol (SRP) provides clear guidance on actions to be taken by all occupants of the facility in the event of a crisis. This is designed to provide consistent, clear, shared language, and a series of actions to be taken by occupants.

*Our Standard Procedure for an Active Shooter, Medical Emergency, Fire/Evacuation, Severe Weather or Lost Child/Unattended Child situation will always be **Hold | Secure | Evacuate | Shelter**. Using this procedure, entities must determine which course is necessary.*

In all instances, it's imperative a representative from the affected area alerts the rest of the building using the PA system to prevent misinformation or panic. Dial ext. 2907, and then wait for the prompt and hit 100# for 1st, 2nd and 3rd floor all at once. We will use color codes to designate the situation and not tip-off any potential threats or cause panic within the building.

When alerting those building-wide of a situation that requires attention, building employee should state:

“Attention, Columbus Community Building employees and patrons, we are currently in a Code [INSERT ACCORDING COLOR]. CCB staff, please act accordingly. We ask members of the public to follow direction of the building staff. Thank you.”

When the situation has been resolved, a designated representative should alert everyone over the intercom saying the following:

“Code (INSERT ACCORDING COLOR) is now clear.”





HOLD | SECURE | LOCKDOWN | EVACUATE | SHELTER

STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOL – PUBLIC ADDRESS

Medical emergency	<i>“Code Purple. Hold in your room or area. Clear the halls.”</i>
Threat inside	<i>“Code Blue. Secure! Get inside.</i>
Threat outside	<i>Code Red. Lock outside doors.</i>
Bomb Threat	<i>“Code Green. Please evacuate the building.” (CPD Lobby is official designated safe space)</i>
Fire	<i>“Code Green. Please evacuate the building.”</i>
HAZMAT	<i>“Code Green. Please evacuate the building.”</i>
Tornado/Severe weather	<i>“Code Orange. Shelter in designated safe spaces”</i>

STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOL – INTERNAL ACTION

Purple (Hold)	<i>Clear the hallways and remain in area until “All clear” has been announced. Do business as usual.</i>
Blue (Secure)	<i>Bring everyone into secure space, lock doors, increase situational awareness until “All clear” has been announced. Do business as usual.</i>
Red (Lockdown)	<i>Check locks and lights. Get out of sight.</i>
Green (Evacuate)	<i>Call 911. Lead public and staff to evacuation location (CPD). Report any injuries to law enforcement.</i>
Orange (Shelter)	<i>Call 911. Lead public and staff to evacuation location (CPD). Report any injuries to law enforcement.</i>



HOLD

Hold is followed by the directive “In your room, office or area.” It’s the protocol to use when hallways need to be kept clear of occupants

Occupants are instructed to:

- *Clear the hallways and remain in your room or area until all clear is announced*
- *Do business as usual*

Staff are instructed to:

- *Close doors in your immediate area*
- *Account for occupants and staff*
- *Do business as usual*



SECURE

Secure is followed by the directive “Get Inside. Lock Outside Doors.” It’s the protocol used to safeguard people within the building.

Occupants are instructed to:

- *Return to inside of building*
- *Do business as usual*

Staff are instructed to:

- *Recover occupants and staff from outside the building*
- *Lock outside doors*
- *Increase situational awareness*
- *Account for occupants and staff*
- *Do business as usual*



LOCKDOWN

“Lockdown” is followed by the directive “Locks, lights and out of sight.” This is the protocol to use to secure individual rooms and keep occupants quiet and in place.

Occupants are instructed to:

- *Move away from sight*
- *Maintain silence*
- *Do not open the door*
- *Prepare to evade or defend*

Staff are instructed to:

- *Lock interior doors*
- *Turn out the lights*
- *Move away from sight*
- *Maintain silence*
- *Do not open doors*
- *Account for occupants and staff*
- *Prepare to evade or defend*



EVACUATE

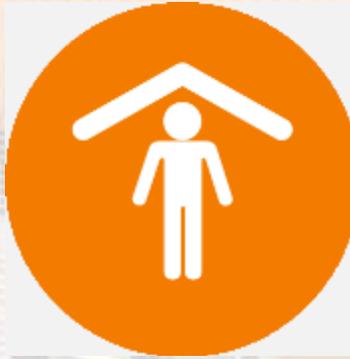
Evacuate may be followed by indicating a location and is used to move people from one location to a different location in or out of the building. All building staff should make their way safely to the designated exterior safe space (Columbus Police Department lobby, 2330 14th St.).

Occupants are instructed to:

- *Leave stuff behind if required to*
- *If possible, bring a mobile phone*
- *Follow instructions*

Staff are instructed to:

- *Bring a list of employees if available*
- *Lead occupants to evacuation location*
- *Account for occupants and staff*
- *Report injuries or problems to first responders*



SHELTER

Use this to state the hazard and safety strategy for group and self-protection.

All building staff should make their way safely to the designated safe space (nearest internal public restrooms on any of the three floors) during a tornado warning or other incident.

Occupants are instructed to:

- *Leave stuff behind if required to*
- *If possible, bring a mobile phone*
- *Follow instructions*

Staff are instructed to:

- *Lead safety strategy*
- *Account for occupants and staff; notify if there are any injured or missing people*

All building staff should make their way safely to the designated safe spaces (public restroom on all three floors) in the event of a weather event like a tornado warning.)

POSSIBLE SITUATIONS

If a person is reported missing, staff should quickly attempt to get name, age and description of the missing child or adult.

A staff member will dial extension 2907 and press 100 for all floors to announce:

“Your attention please. We are looking for INSERT NAME and AGE.”

- *A designated representative from City Hall, Columbus Public Library, the Water Office and Columbus Children’s Museum should all meet in the first-floor lobby by the front doors within 10 minutes of the announcement after searching their respective areas, including public restrooms.*
- *Library staff should have a person stand at each exit in the facility, including at THE internal Downtown Mug entrance.*
- *Take the parent or responsible party to the Columbus Public Library first floor circulation desk to wait for the return of the missing child.*
- *Staff will need to check east restroom and take the emergency stairs to stand by the East Exit.*
- *Staff needs to check west family restroom and the West emergency stairs.*
- *All building staff not covering exits should immediately stop what they are doing and check all possible areas (restrooms, etc.) within the building starting with the top floor and moving down as a floor is cleared.*
- *Staff covering the exits should stop the child if they are alone, however, they should not try to stop an adult from leaving the building with the child but take note of the description or take photos if possible and immediately notify the parent or responsible person of the description and exit point and call 911.*

ACTIVE SHOOTER SCENARIO

How to respond when an active shooter is in your area.

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. Remember, customers and clients are likely to follow the lead of employees and managers during an active shooter situation.

1. Evacuate

If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Be sure to:

- *Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow using the nearest available exit and make your way quickly to the Columbus Police Department lobby, 2330 14th St.*
- *Leave your belongings behind*
- *Help others escape, if possible*
- *Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be*
- *Keep your hands visible*
- *Follow the instructions of any police officers*
- *Do not attempt to move wounded people*
- *Call 911 when you are safe*

2. Hide out

If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.

Your hiding place should:

- *Be out of the active shooter’s view*
- *Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office with a closed and locked door)*

- *Do not trap yourself or restrict your options for movement*

To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place:

- *Lock the door*
- *Blockade the door with heavy furniture*

If the active shooter is nearby:

- *Lock the door*
- *Silence your cell phone and/or pager*
- *Turn off any source of noise (i.e., radios, televisions)*
- *Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks)*
- *Remain quiet*

If evacuation and hiding out are not possible:

- *Remain calm*
- *Dial 911, if possible, to alert police to the active shooter's location*
- *If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen*

3. Take action against the active shooter

As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by:

- *Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her*
- *Throwing items and improvising weapons*
- *Yelling*
- *Committing to your actions*

FIRE

Evacuate and head to Columbus Police Department lobby, 2330 14th St., which has been designated as the gathering space.

If you see smoke or a fire has not been detected/or if the smoke alarm goes off:

- *Remain calm and dial 911*
- *Announce to everyone to evacuate the building and the designated gathering space is the Columbus Police Department lobby.*
- *The elevators are inoperative during a fire alarm. Use the nearest staircase. (See attached map at the end of this document)*

UNATTENDED CHILD

If a child 10 years and younger is left unattended:

- *Staff will notify a supervisor and will stay with the child as they try to locate the responsible person by searching the nearby area or paging on the library intercom using the parent's name or physical appearance.*
 - *If child knows parent's name, page using parent's name. Say, "Parent's name, please report to the (whichever desk the child is at) There is someone looking for you."*

- *If child does not know parent's name, announce we have a child looking for their parent/guardian.*
- *If a child seems anxious, it is OK to have a staff person take them to the children's area, providing a staff person remains at the desk to wait for the parent/guardian.*
- *When the responsible person is located, staff will explain the library policy in regard to children, and give them a copy of the unattended children policy.*
- *If the responsible person is not located within a half-hour, or if the library is closing within a half-hour, the staff will notify the police to pick up the child. Two staff members will remain with the child in the building until the parent or police arrive.*

SEVERE WEATHER

The Columbus Community Building's designated storm shelters are the bathrooms on all three floors.

If the siren sounds and you have time, make an announcement on the PA system. Be aware hearing-impaired people may not have heard the sirens.

Stay in the shelter until the tornado warning has passed. If there is a severe weather warning, follow the guidelines from local weather agencies.

If there are high winds over 50 mph, staff should ask people to move away from windows for their safety.

SHARED SPACES POLICIES

ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE BUILDING

- *No advertisements or marketing materials of building partners or outside persons/organizations shall be placed in the common shared spaces without approval from the Community Coordinator.*
- *Regular rule of thumb is advertisements and marketing shall not be placed unless under special circumstances in efforts to keep the common shared spaces uncluttered.*
- *Majority of advertisements and marketing materials shall be placed in the designated area determined by the City of Columbus.*

TRASH AREA (INCLUDE CURRENT TRASH SCHEDULE)

- **Break down boxes**
 - *All building partners and their affiliates are required to break down all boxes before throwing them into the recycle bin to make ample space for all other building users.*
- **Ensure lids can close**
 - *When throwing garbage away, all building partners must ensure the receptacles' lids close to prevent the garbage from littering the Community Building and surrounding businesses. If the building partner's trash cannot fit into the receptacle with the lid down, the partner is required to store the garbage until the receptacles are emptied.*
- **No trash outside of receptacles**
 - *Under no circumstance should garbage or recycling ever be placed outside of the provided receptacles. If the desired disposable object does not fit into the receptacles due to size, other arrangements must be made by building partner to dispose of said item.*
- **Current trash/recycling schedule**
 - *Mondays = trash*
 - *Fridays = recycling*

LOADING AND UNLOADING DOCKS (INCLUDE CURRENT TRASH SCHEDULE)

- **Must not leave vehicle for extended times outside of in-process loading/unloading**
 - *All loading / unloading docks may be used by building partners. Designated loading / unloading docks are located on the front / south side of the building and on the east side of the building next to the garbage receptacles.*
 - *Vehicles may not be left at these docks for longer than the immediate loading / unloading process by any building partner.*
- **Include trash / recycle schedule**
 - *When using the east loading / unloading dock by the garbage receptacles, building partners must be mindful of the trash / recycling schedules to ensure the necessary teams can access the area. A sign will be posted in this area indicating the trash pick-up date.*
- **General public must be escorted in secured areas unless otherwise approved**

- *If public affiliates of building partners are using the east loading / unloading dock, affiliates must be escorted by approved internal personnel in ALL secured areas.*
-

WORKSHOP AREA

- *The workshop is accessible to all building partners.*
- *The workshop may be used by INTERNAL PERSONNEL ONLY. Under no circumstance should building partner affiliates or the general public, be allowed to utilize the equipment, supplies, or space of the workshop unless given permission by City Building Maintenance or Chief Building & Code Official.*
- *Under no circumstance should the workshop area be used by building partners for general storage unless previously granted permission by City Building Maintenance or Chief Building & Code Official. If items are left in the workshop area without permission, the City of Columbus retains the right to dispose of or claim said items.*
- *If equipment or supplies are borrowed from the workshop, they must be returned promptly after usage. If a building partner needs to use the equipment or supply for an extended amount of time, they will inform Building Maintenance. No supplies or equipment can be retained for more than 2 days unless given permission by Building Maintenance.*
- *Any heavy or power equipment will require use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*

LOBBY (INCLUDE A DOCUMENT OF THE RENTAL POLICIES AND CLEAN-UP)

- **Must receive approval from Community Coordinator**
-ALL uses of the building lobby by building partners must receive approval from the Community Coordinator.
- **Must notify all other users in the building**
-For any program usage of the lobbies, the host partners must inform all other building partners of the usage of the space so all can be informed and plan accordingly.
- **Policies, procedures, clean-up**
-In the usage of the lobbies, all rental policies and clean-up apply to the building partner.
-As listed in the rental policies, there is not attaching anything to the walls of the lobby.
-Events and programs in the lobby may not under any circumstance involve the serving or consumption of alcohol while any other CCB occupant is open.
-The lobby may be rented by the public only if all CCB entities are closed.
- Alcohol may not exit the building at any time.
- **Must leave room for general public and staff to function**
-In the case of programming, high expected traffic, or installations, building partner must ensure there is still space for the general public and staff to maneuver and function. All capacities of this area must follow the appointed restrictions to ensure safety during use.

FRONT PORCH

- **Must receive approval from Community Coordinator**
 - *All uses of the Front Porch that may result in large numbers, extensive set up, or may alter the infrastructure of the space must receive approval from the Community Coordinator.*
- **Must notify all other users in the building**
 - *For any program usage of the front porch, the host partners must inform all other building partners of the usage of the space so all can be informed and plan accordingly.*
- **Policies, procedures, clean-up**
 - *In the usage of the front porch, all rental policies and clean-up of the other shared space in the building apply to the building partner.*
 - *Events and programs on the front porch may not under any circumstance involve the serving or consumption of alcohol.*
- **Must still leave room for general public and staff to function**
 - *In the case of programming, high expected traffic, or installations, building partner must ensure that there is still space for the general public and staff to maneuver and function.*
 - *Under no circumstance may the building partner do anything that may impede the access to the front doors of the Columbus Community Building.*

- **PETITIONS**

The general public is allowed to solicit petition signings outside of the Columbus Community Building as long as the proposed petitions do not discriminate any persons for reasons including, but not limited to race, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, or familial standings.

PLAYGROUND

- **Programming must not hinder the use / accessibility by the general public**
 - *The Community Building playground must remain accessible to the general public at all times. No programming or usage of the playground by a building partner can hinder the use and accessibility of the general public during the duration of their event.*
 - *Under no circumstance may items be adhered or attached to the playground equipment.*
 - *Any program or use of the playground by building partners must not create unsafe conditions in the usage of the playground equipment.*
 - *All building partners must clean-up after themselves following their usage of the playground.*
 - *All children aged 10 years and under shall be adequately supervised by a responsible caregiver at all times. Children shall not be considered adequately supervised if their caregiver is participating in a meeting, class, or program held in a different part of the building or surrounding area.*

MINIMUM AGE TO UTILIZE CCB SERVICES AND AMENITIES ALONE

- **Children are welcome in the Community Building; however, parents and caregivers are responsible for monitoring the activities, regulating the behavior, and the wellbeing of their children while in the CCB.**

- All children aged 10 years and under shall be adequately supervised by a responsible caregiver at all times. Children shall not be considered adequately supervised if their caregiver is participating in a meeting, class, or program held in a different room.
- Caregivers' requirements to stay with children during scheduled building programs is deemed by the building partner hosting/leading the program; however, Community Building partners are not responsible for the supervision and well-being of dropped off children. If the caregiver chooses to leave the building, they will be at the program location when the program is scheduled to conclude. Persons responsible for children who have special needs related to physical or mental ability, disruptive behavior, emotional problems, lack of adequate attention span, incomplete social skills, or children who cannot take themselves to the restroom etc., shall remain with their children at all times.
- Children 11 years and older may use the Community Building unattended, subject to the rules and regulations of this Community Building.
- **If a child 10 years and younger is left unattended:**
 - Staff will notify a supervisor and will stay with the child as they try to locate the responsible person by searching the nearby area or paging on the Community Building intercom using the parent's name or physical appearance.
 - If child knows parent's name, page using parent's name. Say, "Parent's name, please report to the (whichever desk the child is at) there is someone looking for you."
 - If child does not know parent's name, announce we have a child looking for their parent/guardian.
 - If a child seems anxious, it is OK to have a staff person take them to the Library children's area, providing a staff person remains at the desk to wait for the parent/guardian.
 - When the responsible person is located, staff will explain the Community Building policy in regard to children, and give them a copy of the unattended children policy.
 - If the responsible person is not located within a half-hour, or if the Community Building is closing within a half-hour, the staff will notify the police to pick up the child. Staff will remain with the child in the building until the parent or police arrive.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM EAST PATIO SPACE

- **Programming must not hinder CCB employees and guests**
 - Any activities happening on the Children's Museum east patio must be contained to the space and not hinder CCB employees or other guests entering or leaving the building.
 - Any activity, that could permanently damage the patio space concrete or the exterior of the building is strictly prohibited. Painting is only permitted if proper protection to the concrete is taken to prevent stains or other damage.
 - Alcohol cannot be served or drank on this space.

CCB OUTDOOR SIDEWALKS

- Any activity happening immediately outside of the CCB must not hinder the public's ability to walk past using the sidewalk. (See 'Front Porch' on page 14 for further details.)

CCB ELEVATORS

- *All who choose to use the public elevators must adhere to weight capacity (5,000 pounds)*
- *No jumping, stomping kicking, hitting or any kind of roughhousing is permitted in the elevators*
- *Any injuries that occur in the elevator must be reported to the City and then shared with Otis (elevator provider)*
- *The elevators are inoperative during a fire alarm and other instances, such as repair. Use the nearest staircase. (See attached map at the end of this document)*

SERVICE ANIMALS

- *Guide dogs or other service animals accompanying individuals with disabilities and especially trained and educated for that purpose shall be admitted on the same terms and conditions as others, and subject to the same regulations, as generally govern the admission of the public to the property. The animals are not permitted to run free or roam in a building or on the property and must be in a guiding harness or on leash and under the control of the individual at all times while in a building or on the property.*
- *Animals without proper certification visible will not be permitted in the CCB or on its premises.*

BUILDING USE POLICIES

SIGNAGE

No signage of any kind is allowed on the exterior doors of the building.

SMOKING/VAPING

Smoking or vaping of any kind is not permitted anywhere in the interior or immediate exterior of the building, including on the benches or anywhere under the building's awning, or at the community playground.

WINDOW PAINTINGS

Planned window paintings will be allowed in specific locations. Building staff must email desired concept and express where the window painting will be displayed at least three weeks ahead of desired painting schedule and receive written approval from a CCB Stewards member to proceed. Painter will also be responsible for cleanup and removal of painting.

IMPROPER CONDUCT

Improper conduct may include, but is not limited to the following:

- *Talking in a voice louder than a normal conversational level*
- *Inappropriate use of cellphones*
- *Failure to wear attire which conforms to the standard of the community for public places, including shoes and shirts*
- *Taking photographs or videos of employees or the public without permission*
- *Unauthorized use of age-specific areas and services*
- *Behaving in a manner which is either physically or verbally abusive to building staff or building people*
- *Running or rushing*
- *The use of skateboards, roller blades and roller boards on Community Building premises, indoors or outdoors*
- *Repeatedly going in and out of spaces, or excessive milling about*
- *Excessive public displays of affection*
- *Swearing / cursing*
- *Gathering in a way that impedes indoor and outdoor traffic areas*
- *Laying down, sleeping, or using bedding (blankets, pillows, etc.)*
- *Unauthorized consumption of alcohol and/or illegal drugs in the building or on the premises*

- *Use of tobacco, controlled substances, or electronic smoking devices on Community Building premises, indoors or outdoors*
- *Eating and drinking where prohibited*
- *Removal or attempted removal of building and building partners materials or property without authorization or checkout*
- *Marking, breaking or otherwise damaging any portion of the building, paved areas, sidewalks, or other structures constituting property, including landscaping and grass;*
- *Any activity deemed inappropriate by building staff*
- *Organizations and groups are responsible for the conduct of persons they bring into the Community Building*

CONSEQUENCES OF IMPROPER CONDUCT

- *Any individual who behaves in an improper manner may be asked by the staff to leave the Community Building premises without a warning. If the individual is a child, the parent or caregiver will also be asked to leave. The Columbus Police Department will be contacted if the person does not obey such request to leave the premises.*
- *If any person continues improper conduct after being readmitted to the Community Building after a previous violation, such person may be excluded from the building for periods of one or more days, weeks, or months, up to permanently, as may be deemed appropriate by **ANY CITY DEPARTMENT HEAD or the CITY ADMINISTRATOR**, and involved staff, after a fair and reasonable consideration of the pertinent facts and circumstances.*
- *The Department Head involved must file an official report using a 'INCIDENT FORM' and submit it to the City Human Resources director.*

BUILDING CLOSURE POLICIES

HOLIDAY AND OTHER PLANNED CLOSURES:

1. All entities within the Columbus Community Building (City Hall, Columbus Public Library, The Downtown Mug, Columbus Area Children's Museum) **will be required to send an email to ccbstewards@columbusne.us with closures for the month ahead by the 20th of each month.**
2. A graphic will be deployed to our Visix monitors in the library and in the building each month announcing closures for all entities within the building. One building, one message.
3. The public communications manager will share graphic about closures within the building on City Government's social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and Columbus Public Library (Facebook and Instagram)
4. No posters or flyers are permitted to be taped to building lobby or any door or window entrance

UNPLANNED CLOSURES

1. All entities within the Columbus Community Building (City Hall, Columbus Public Library, The Downtown Mug, Columbus Area Children's Museum) will be required to send an email to ccbstewards@columbusne.us to relay any unexpected closures within the building outside of normal holidays

BUILDING CLOSURE PROCEDURES

City Hall

1. A City Hall representative who is sitting/overseeing the front desk at City Hall should walk down the third-floor corridor to the west staircase and make sure there is nobody sitting or standing in the hallway, Community Room and restrooms. Make sure the doors to the staircase are closed.
2. A City Hall representative checks the conference rooms located in the front side of City Hall and the lobby to make sure nobody from the public is still in the building.
3. A City Hall representative makes sure the City Hall entrance doors are locked and closed.

Children's Museum and Library

Main Lobby:

1. Make sure the three main building entrance doors, including the handicap door, are locked.
2. Straighten the furniture, putting it back in its proper place.
3. Pick up any trash in the area.
4. Check the public elevator for individuals still in the building.
 - Press the 2nd and 3rd-floor buttons to ensure the elevator did not go to those floors, if it did, one will need to look for patrons still in those spaces.

5. Check Idea Box for patrons still in the building.
6. Check space around vending machines for individuals still in the building.
7. Check main floor restrooms for individuals still in the building.
8. Make sure the Exit door to the Maintenance Hallway is secured.

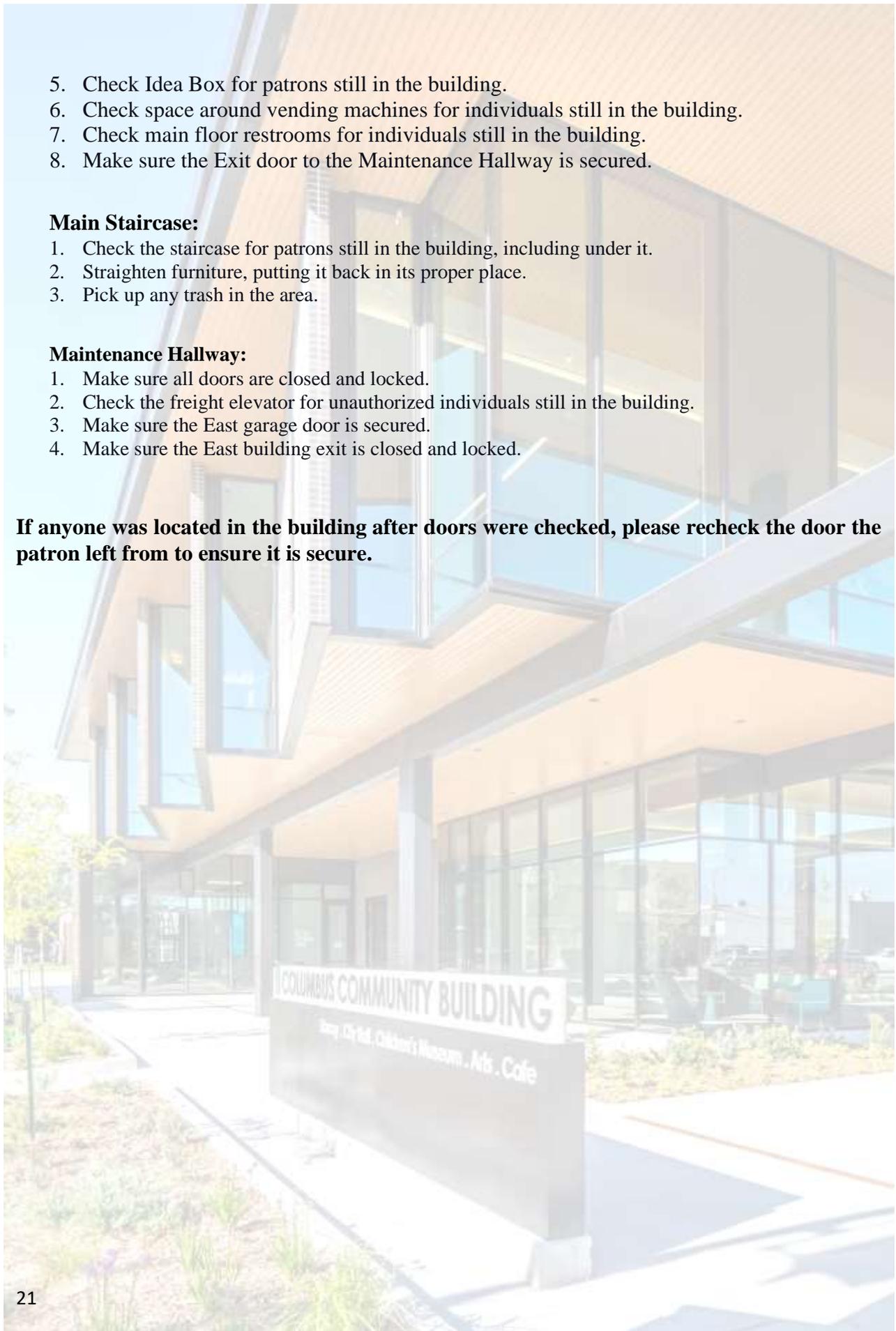
Main Staircase:

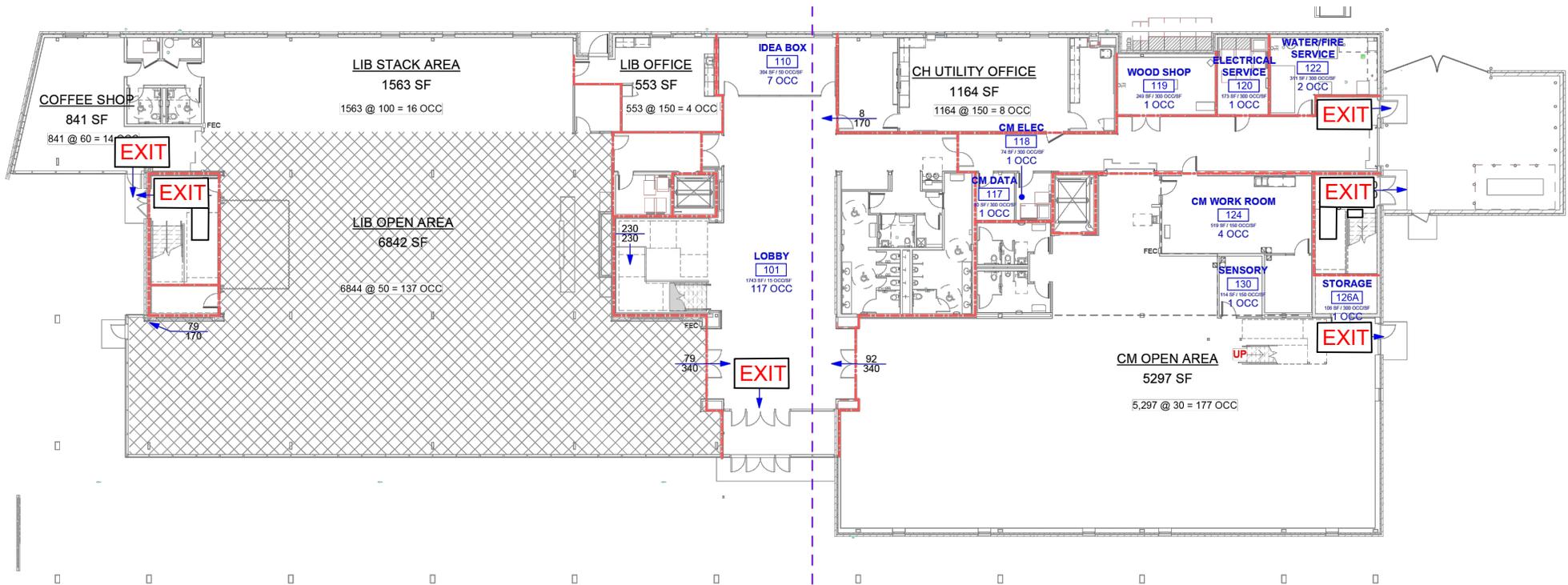
1. Check the staircase for patrons still in the building, including under it.
2. Straighten furniture, putting it back in its proper place.
3. Pick up any trash in the area.

Maintenance Hallway:

1. Make sure all doors are closed and locked.
2. Check the freight elevator for unauthorized individuals still in the building.
3. Make sure the East garage door is secured.
4. Make sure the East building exit is closed and locked.

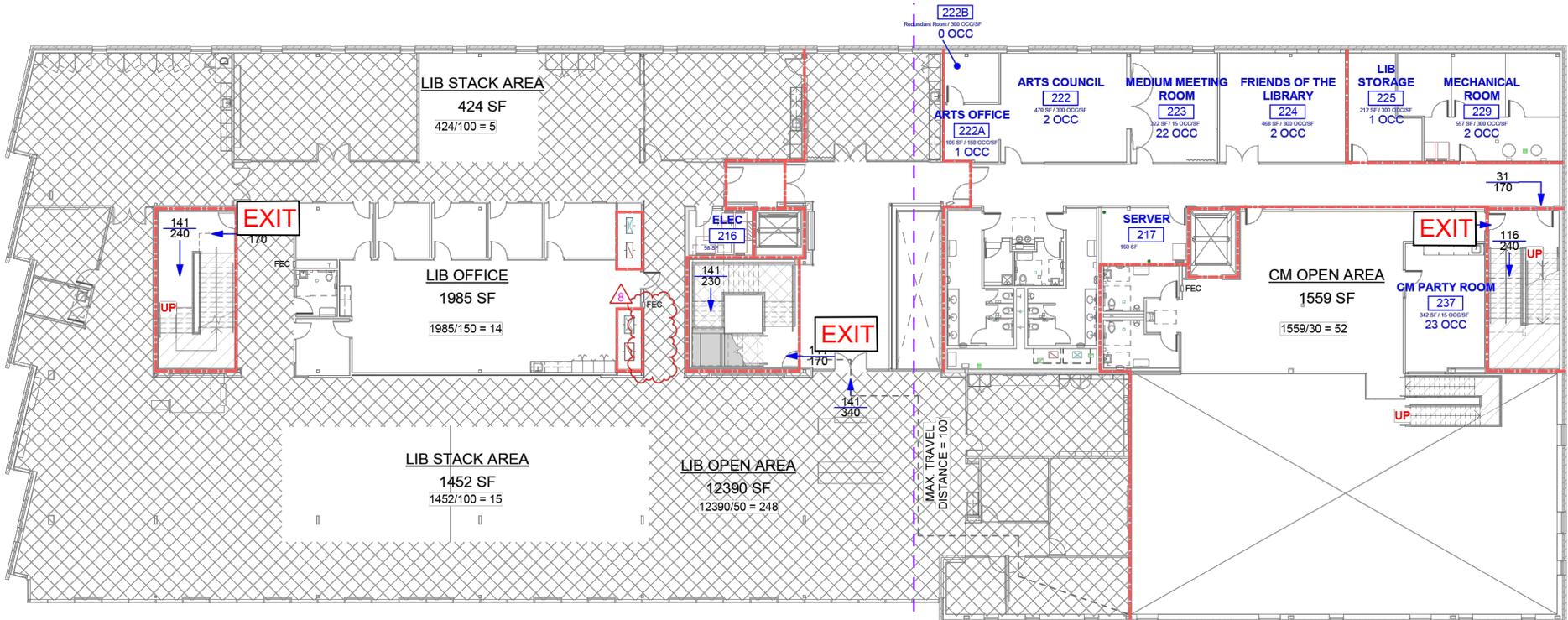
If anyone was located in the building after doors were checked, please recheck the door the patron left from to ensure it is secure.





1 FIRST FLOOR

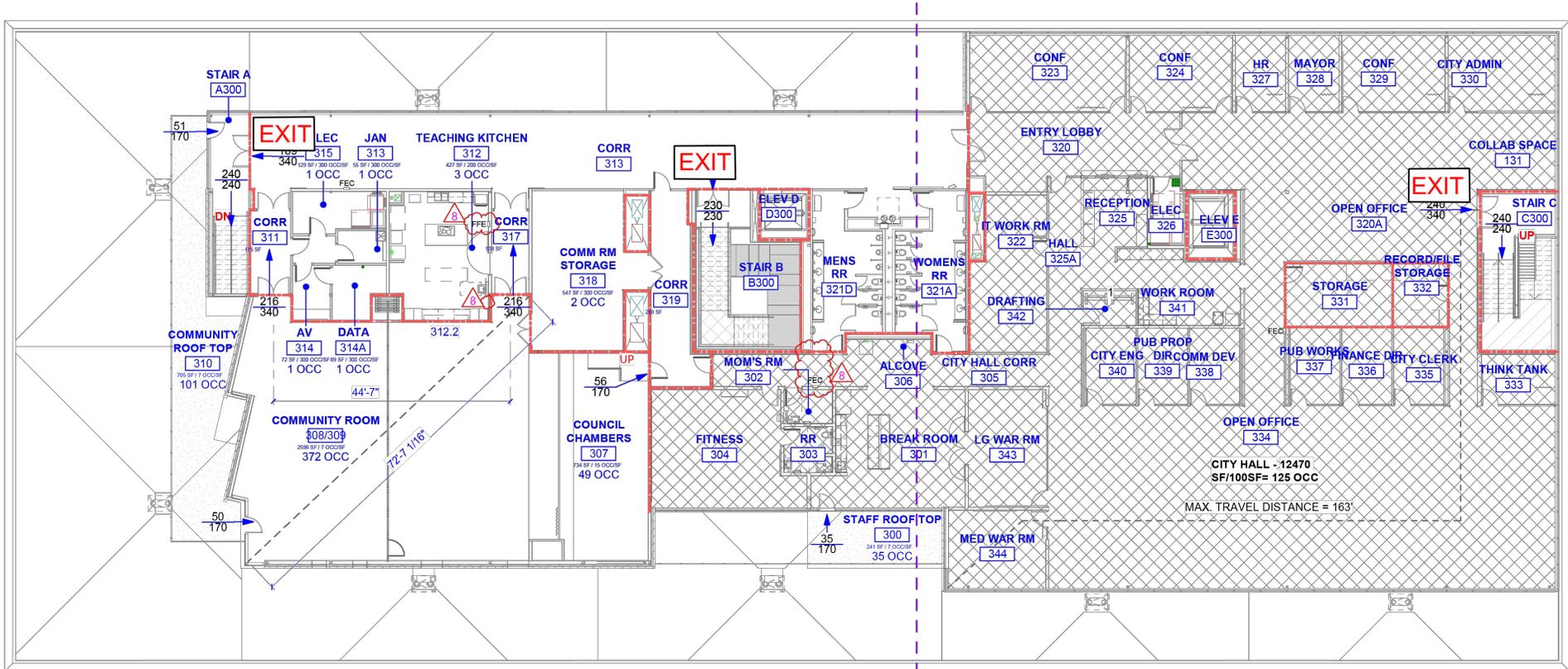
488 OCCUPANTS @ FIRST FLOOR
 EGRESS IS AT GRADE LEVEL WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO THE EXTERIOR
 3 POINTS OF EGRESS (488/3 = 163)
 3 STAIRS (163 * .3) = 49" or 4'-1" provide 77" at stair A, 69" at stair B, 73" at stair C
 3 STAIR DOORS (163 * .2) = 33" however 36" minimum typical, egress directly to the exterior at the East and West stairs



369 OCCUPANTS @ SECOND FLOOR
3 POINTS OF EGRESS (388/3 = 130)
3 STAIRS (130 * .3) = 39" or 3'-3" provide 77" at stair A, 69" at stair B, 73" at stair C
3 STAIR DOORS (130 * .2) = 26" however 36" minimum typical

2 SECOND FLOOR
 1/16" = 1'-0"





3 THIRD FLOOR

1/16" = 1'-0"

691 OCCUPANTS @ THIRD FLOOR
 3 POINTS OF EGRESS: (691/3 = 231)
 3 STAIRS: 691 x 0.3 : 3 = 70" or 5'-10", provide 77" at stair A, 69" at stair B, 73" at stair C
 3 STAIR DOORS: 691 x 0.2 : 3 = 47" or 3'-11", provide 72" door

ARTS
 STOR.

3. Crisis Communications Plan.



City Hall
2500 14th St., Suite 3
Columbus, NE 68601
402-562-4232
columbusne.us

Memorandum

Date: 01-07-2025

To: Tara Vasicek, City Administrator

From: Matt Lindberg, Public Communications Manager

RE: Crisis Communications Plan

Recommendation:

Have proposed Crisis Communications Plan recommended by the Public Property, Safety and Works Committee, and then adopted by the Columbus City Council.

Discussion:

A crisis communication plan is intended to ensure that, in the event of a crisis, disaster, or emergency related to the City of Columbus, Nebraska Government, information about the crisis and the action being taken is disseminated appropriately, accurately and clearly internally and externally.

Fiscal Impact:

None

Alternative:

The policy is not recommended and subsequently adopted.

Signature:

By: Matt Lindberg

Approved By: [Signature]

CITY OF COLUMBUS NE CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

SCOPE OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

A crisis communication plan is intended to ensure that, in the event of a crisis, disaster, or emergency related to the City of Columbus, Nebraska Government, information about the crisis and the action being taken is disseminated appropriately, accurately and clearly.

Generally, an issue requiring the use of this plan will fall into one of two categories:

Emergency: Any situation that may involve or threaten to cause loss of life or injury to City staff, elected officials or members of the public. **Examples: Fire, explosions, accidents, tornado. These will be handled in consultation with the city administrator and communications manager.**

Non-emergency: Any situation that threatens the reputation or stature of the City, poses legal ramifications, but does not pose a direct physical threat to employees, elected officials or City property. Crisis communications that are controversial or sensitive in nature but are not emergencies (internal scandal such as negative conduct by City staff or elected officials, negative news coverage, etc..) will be handled under the direction of the city administrator with assistance from the public communications manager.

Both types of crises will make news. Whether a crisis is deemed an emergency or non-emergency does not necessarily reflect the gravity of the situation, particularly in terms of long-term consequences. In all cases, the City needs to provide full disclosure of factual information as quickly as possible, communicate instructions if necessary; and make decision with full regard to individual privacy and legal responsibility.

PURPOSE

Timely and accurate communications to city residents, the surrounding county residents, city employees and their families, visitors, community partners and the news media are essential in the event of any emergency or crisis. The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for effectively communicating with partners and stakeholders accurately and consistently, utilizing the resources that are available during an incident.

Key Objectives of the Plan

- Provide City leadership with a framework to execute timely and accurate communications activities during a crisis.
- Ensure that employees are aware of their potential role in executing the Crisis Communications Plan.
- Protect the image and reputation of the City.
- Provide guidance on appropriate communications content.
- Identify potential partners to enhance communications efforts.

CITY OF COLUMBUS CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

NAME	TITLE	OFFICE	CELL	EMAIL
Tara Vasicek	City Administrator	City Hall	402-363-1610	Tara.vasicek@columbusne.us
Matt Lindberg	Public Communications Manager	City Hall	402-910-9246	Matthew.lindberg@columbusne.us
Tammy Orender	HR Director	City Hall	402-276-1668	Tammy.ordender@columbusne.us
Rachel Pensick	JCC Director	JCC	402-942-5062	Rachel.pensick@columbusne.us
Doug Molczyk	Police Captain	Columbus Police Department	402-276-4033	Douglas.molczyk@columbusne.us
Jim Bulkley	Mayor/Liaison member	City Hall	402-563-4837	Jim.Bulkley@columbusne.us

POTENTIAL THREATS

This list represents an example of the types of threats that may affect the City of Columbus and its residents. It is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to provide a premise for communications planning. In addition to local events, there may be occasions for City officials to convey a level of reassurance to residents in a national or global crisis.

Public Safety – an incident or circumstance that puts the public in danger

- High Risk Police Event
- Rioting/Violent Public Demonstration
- Missing Persons – children, elderly
- Interruption of Essential Services
- Bombing or Threat of Bombing

Public Health – an incident or circumstance the puts the health of the public at risk

- Public Utility Failure (water or sewer)
- Hazardous Material Spill
- Air Quality
- Pandemic/Virus

Natural Disaster – an extreme event that may occur with or without warning

- Severe Snow Storm
- Wind Storm
- Wildfire
- Tornado
- Flooding

Reputation – an incident that may cause the community to lose confidence in City Leadership

- Cyber Breach
- Incident Resulting in Diminished Public Confidence
- Financial Indiscretion
- Harassment/Discrimination Suit

Transportation – an incident or circumstance that prohibits citizens and businesses from conducting daily business

- Highway 30 Closure
- Unplanned City Street Closures

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Stakeholders are described as persons, groups, or organizations that may be affected by the event, the organization or both.

Partners are described as anyone who may aid in communications during a crisis. A list of contacts for this group will be attached.

All entities are external unless indicated.

Stakeholders

- City of Columbus residents
- Businesses within the City
- Previous and future visitors to the City
- City employees' families
- Labor unions

Partners

(Current contact information is kept for this list of potential partners.)

- City Employees including City Council Members (Internal)
- Other Government Agencies
 - o Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce
 - o State of Nebraska
 - o Federal Government
 - o Nebraska Department of Transportation
 - o The Red Cross
 - o Columbus Community Hospital
 - o Columbus Family YMCA
 - o East Central District Health Department
 - o Assisted Living Facilities in town
- Volunteers
 - o Churches and Faith Based Community
- Media
 - o Local, Regional, and National

-Local: The Columbus Telegram, Alpha Media, Nebraska News Channel

CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

When a crisis of any nature has occurred, it is the goal of the City to provide accurate and timely information to the media, employees, stakeholders and partners in the community.

Send a copy of every news release related to a crisis to City Council and City Staff to ensure they have the most current information.

Certain events may dictate that the City Council and Staff be notified prior to any public notification. This determination will be made by the City Administrator with assistance from the Public Communications Manager.

News releases will be released by the Communications staff only. Each release will be approved by the City Administrator (unless delegated to the Department Head), the Department Head responsible for the specific information in the news release, and the Public Communications Manager or their designee.

News Releases will be posted to the City website www.columbusne.us and shared on the City's social media channels (Facebook, X, Instagram).

Initial Phase

Be First – It is important that information is delivered in a timely manner to get ahead of the story.

Be Right – It is critical that information is accurate and truthful. Confirm facts. If all of the answers are not known, explain what the process is to gather the information additional information.

Be Credible – Designate a credible spokesperson and subject matter expert to deliver the key messages. Repeat the key messages three times.

Express Empathy – Recognize the impact of the event on victims and their families.

Promote Action – Tell people what they should be doing to protect themselves and their families during the crisis.

Show Respect – Recognize that people may feel vulnerable in a crisis and always show them respect. This will also help promote cooperation and build relationships.

Maintenance Phase

Provide On-Going Updates – Distribute updated information on a regular basis through news releases, press conferences, community meetings, and social media as appropriate.

Provide Background Support – Provide more in-depth information to the public and the media through fact sheets and website postings.

Address Misinformation – Monitor all media and correct any information that is incorrect or could be misunderstood.

Repeat Actions – Repeat messages that inform the public of meaningful steps they can take to protect themselves, their families, and their communities.

Resolution Phase

Continue Updates – Continue communications with the public and the media regarding recovery efforts.

Educate – Inform the community on ways they can reduce their risk in future events by promoting behaviors that reduce risk and encouraging personal preparation.

Evaluation Phase

Incident – After the crisis, evaluate what went well with communications to each stakeholder group and what can be improved upon.

Tools – Evaluate the documents and tools used to facilitate communications during the crisis and adjust as needed for future event.

Plan – Determine adjustments that need to be made to the Crisis Communications Plan and update the document.

MESSAGING BEST PRACTICES

Do

1. Be empathetic for those affected by the crisis.
2. Be honest. State the facts without dressing them up.
3. Say “I don’t know,” if you don’t know the answer to a question.
4. Assume everything you say to a reporter is “on the record”.
5. Be concise and to the point.
6. Repeat key messages three times throughout the interview.
7. Refer to the organization’s mission and value and tie the message to them if possible.
8. Give yourself time to gather your thoughts.
9. Refer to your notes if needed during an interview.
10. Provide fact sheets when possible.
11. Refer the audience to the City website for up-to-date and in-depth information.

Don’t

1. Don’t say “no comment.” Tell them if you don’t know the answer or cannot release the information at that time and why.
2. Don’t speculate or offer “what ifs.”
3. Don’t blame others.
4. Never joke around. Humor is never appropriate in a crisis.
5. Don’t agree with a reporter’s statement if you don’t know if it is true.
6. Don’t fall into the “pause” trap. Answer the question and stop talking.
7. Don’t get angry. Reporters may push you. Be patient and consistent with your message.

Key Messages Applicable to Most Crisis Situations

1. The safety of our (citizens, employees, police officers, the community...) is our first priority.
2. Our hearts go out to the victims and their families.
3. We are working closely with (organizations i.e., Fire Department, Red Cross, School District) to resolve the problem.
4. We are committed to keeping the public updated as quickly as possible as we learn more.
5. We are utilizing all available resources to resolve/fix the (problem).

THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Internal Team

The Internal Communications Team for the City of Columbus is comprised of:

- Public Communications Manager– Serves as Public Information Officer (PIO)
 - o Works with City Administrator, Incident Commander and Department Heads on crafting and approving all messages. Releases messages.
- IT – Serves as a back-up to the PIO
 - o Helps to gather data, monitors social media and informs PIO of any trends or concerns. Posts approved messages to social media and the website. Helps to disseminate information as necessary.

MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

It is the role of the Communications Team to provide timely and accurate information to all partners and stakeholders. The Team will:

- Gather Information
- Verify Information
- Develop Key Messages
- Obtain Appropriate Approval
- Release Information through Appropriate Channels

Message Approval

News releases and key messages will be developed by the Public Communications Manager in conjunction with the City Administrator, Incident Command Staff and the Department Head or Subject Matter Expert. All information to be released will be approved by the Incident Commander or the City Administrator, the Department Head or Subject Matter Expert responsible for the technical information, and the PIO or their designee. All news releases will be sent by the Public Communications Manager or Communications Team Member. The Communications Team will release messages to the media, social media, partners, and to other designated departments and volunteers to help with the message delivery.

Designated Spokespersons

In the event of a crisis, the initial message, acknowledging the incident (what happened), expressing empathy and giving high level instructions (boil water, stay in place, stay inside), will be delivered by the following officials based on their availability:

- Public Communications Manager
- City Administrator
- The Mayor

The initial spokesperson will then introduce the Department Head or Subject Matter Expert to give details on what we know, how this happened, what we are doing to resolve the situation, and next steps.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Types of Media

Television – Immediate impact. Assume they know nothing about the organization or the crisis. Conduct a pre-interview if possible. Focus on 8 – 12 second soundbites. Listen to the whole question before responding. Report the key messages and themes. Use written fact sheets to provide background information.

Newspaper and Magazine – Longer deadlines. More in-depth stories. Often have some subject matter knowledge. Use written fact sheets with relevant data to support verbal interviews.

Radio News – Most immediate deadlines. Tone of voice is the sole medium of the message. Vocalize smooth and complete thoughts. Use relatable examples.

Social Media Platforms, Internet News and Blogs – Immediate information to as many people as possible. Use visuals when possible. Be sure messages are consistent with communications to other media and work within the constraints of the platform.

Questions to Expect from the Media

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Who is involved?
- Where did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- Who is in charge?
- What are you doing for the people who are hurt?
- Is the situation under control?
- Can you fix it?
- What can we expect?
- Why wasn't this prevented?
- What else can go wrong?
- When did you begin working on this (were notified of this, determined this?)
- Are there things you aren't telling us?
- What does this data or information mean?
- Did you know ahead of time that this might happen? Why wasn't this kept from happening?
- What should people do or not do now?
- Are those who got hurt getting help and, if so, how?
- Is this crisis contained?
- When can we get more information?

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media Strategy

Social media is an important and effective communications tool and should be used as a compliment to traditional media to deliver immediate information to as many stakeholders as possible.

Social Media Staffing

During a crisis situation the primarily role of monitoring and managing social media will fall to the Public Communications Manager or whomever is designated as the back-up. Additional staff members will be brought on to the team as needed to maintain the necessary social media presence.

Advantages of Social Media

- Provides immediate information to a wide audience
- Works in support of a broader communications strategy
- Helps dispel rumors by immediately providing accurate information
- Incorporates website links where media outlets and the public can obtain more detailed information
- Can create rapid connections and build relationships with the public
- Can be utilized to keep a pulse on public emotions and concerns

Disadvantages of Social Media

- Many members of Columbus' population are not active on social media
- Social media is time consuming and must be constantly monitored to dispel rumors
- Some social media platforms are limited in how much information can be included
- Allows everyone to become a reporter
- Some people may post to create controversy or advocate for their side of an issue or event

Social Media Messaging

- Be first – if possible, get out ahead of the story
- Be accurate
- Be consistent in messaging with traditional news releases
- Identify who is providing the information (The Columbus Police Department, The City Public Works Department, etc.)
- Use simple but appropriate hashtags to monitor input
- Correct any misinformation or rumors
- Postpone all previously scheduled posts until the crisis is under control
- Join in the conversation and answer questions
- Post appropriate to the platform
- Utilize visuals or video whenever possible
- Direct readers to the City website for more detailed information

- Link to other relevant websites when appropriate
- Ask partners and stakeholders to help spread the message through their networks
- Do not get into an argument - correct misinformation and let it go

Social Media Accounts

Facebook:

City of Columbus Nebraska Government
Columbus Nebraska Police Department
Columbus Nebraska Fire Department
City of Columbus NE Parks and Recreation
Columbus-Platte County Joint Communications Center

Twitter/X:

@NEColumbus
@Columbus_NE_PD

Instagram:

CityofColumbusNE
ColumbusNePolice
colneparksandrec

4. Propose change of meeting time.



City Hall | City Clerk's Office
2500 14th St.
Columbus, NE 68601
402-562-4232
columbusne.us

Memorandum

Date: January 8, 2025

To: Tara Vasicek, City Administrator & City Council

From: Shuraya Choat, City Clerk

RE: Changing the meeting time for Public Finance & Public Property.

Recommendation: I recommend either changing the meeting time for Public Finance / Public Property to 4:30 p.m. or keeping it at 4 p.m.

Discussion:

A city council member has proposed changing the meeting time for the Public Finance, Judiciary, and Personnel Committee from 4 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Staff are open to either option, but would prefer the same meeting time for both committees. This item will be brought forward for discussion at the Public Property, Safety, and Works Committee on 1/13/25 and Public Finance, Judiciary, and Personnel Committee on 1/14/25.

Once a decision is made, I would propose adding the meeting times to the City Council Rules so that it can be reviewed (every other year) and easily amended, if needed.

Fiscal Impact: None

Alternative:

Signature:

By: Shuraya Choat

Approved By: [Signature]

5. Adjournment.