OPMA No Longer Requires Newspaper Publication for Meeting Notices

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On June 30, 2025, Governor Phil Murphy signed S-4654 into law, which amends the legal notice requirements under the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). In particular, the law makes a number of key changes:

- Beginning March 1, 2026, public entities must publish their legal notices on their website, rather than in newspapers.
- Notices must appear on the public entities' websites for at least one week and then archived for one year.
- Public entities are required to send their website link to the Secretary of State for inclusion on the Secretary of State's website.
- Until March 1, 2026, public entities can comply with OPMA either by posting notices in a newspaper or on their website.
- For the duration of the calendar year 2026, public entities must advertise twice per month in an online news publication that provides information about where their legal notices can be obtained on the public entity's website.

OPMA Prior to the Amendments

Under the previous version of OPMA, public bodies—such as municipal councils, school boards, and county boards—were required to publish meeting notices in local print newspapers. These notices had to be posted at least 48 hours in advance of regular and special meetings and include key details like the date, time, location, and, when available, the agenda. In addition to newspaper publication, the law also required that the notice be posted in a prominent location like a town hall bulletin board, filed with the municipal clerk, and submitted to at least two newspapers for publication. These requirements were created in an era when print media was the primary way to reach the public. However, as more publications have moved online and public agencies now maintain their own websites, the law has become outdated and less effective in reaching the public.

What's Changing: A Closer Look at the New Requirements

The recent amendments to the OPMA represent a significant shift in how New Jersey public entities share information about their meetings. Below is a breakdown of the major updates, what they mean, and when they take effect.

Meeting Notices Must Be Posted Online—Starting March 1, 2026

As of March 1, 2026, public entities—such as municipalities, school boards, and county governments—will no longer be required to publish meeting notices in print newspapers. Instead, they must post these notices:

- On their own official website.

- At least 48 hours before the meeting takes place.
- In a conspicuous location on the site, replacing the old requirement to post notices on a physical bulletin board.

These online postings will serve as the official public notice and must still include the date, time, location, and agenda (if available).

Public Notices Must Be Archived for One Year

Once a meeting notice has been posted online, it must remain visible on the public entity's website for at least one week. After that, the public entity must move it to an online archive, and must maintain it in the archive for at least one year. All public entities must have this archive in place by July 1, 2026, and must allow public access to the archive.

A Statewide Central Website Will Link All Notices

To help residents easily find public meeting information across New Jersey, the Secretary of State will create a centralized webpage. This site will:

- Act as a directory, linking to each public entity's legal notices page.
- Be launched by March 2026.
- Provide clickable links to the webpages maintained by towns, counties, school boards, and other public bodies, rather than hosting the notices directly.

Each public entity is required to submit its legal notice webpage link to the Secretary of State for inclusion in the central directory.

Transition Period Through March 1, 2026

To ease the transition, the law allows a flexible compliance period through March 1, 2026. During this time, public entities may choose to publish meeting notices, ordinances, resolutions, and other required notices either:

- In print newspapers.
- On their official website.
- Or both.

Starting March 1, 2026, online posting becomes mandatory for all OPMA-related notices. This flexibility gives public bodies time to prepare their websites and archives, while continuing to meet legal notice requirements.

Additional Online Advertising Requirement for 2026

To help the public adjust to these changes, the law adds a temporary requirement for the 2026 calendar year: from January 1 to December 31, 2026, public entities must advertise twice per month in an online news publication that legal notices can now be found on the public entity's website. The advertisement also should include a link to the website. This ensures continued public awareness, especially for those who may not regularly visit the public entity's website.

What is Staying the Same

While the location of the information is changing, the core principles of OPMA remain in place:

- Meeting notices must still be posted at least 48 hours in advance.

- Information required to be included in the notices has not changed.
- The other requirements in OPMA, such as public comment periods and rules for closed (executive) sessions, continue to apply.
- Violations of the law still carry the same legal consequences.

Conclusion

By moving legal notice requirements from traditional print newspapers to digital platforms, the State is aligning its public access laws with modern digital public news consumption. The good news for public entities is that these changes should make OPMA compliance less burdensome, provided that they timely address the new requirements that will go into place during the transition period. Public entities should be sure to contact their counsel as they work through these new requirements over the next year, including any necessary revisions to their existing policies. The changes also should reduce costs and administrative burdens for public entities, while maintaining the OPMA's core principles of openness and public participation. Ultimately, assuming a smooth transition period, the new OPMA amendments should benefit public entities and the public at-large alike.

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