

CLERK TALK

THE ESSENTIALS & BEYOND

Meetings • Meeting Types • Notices • Agendas • Minutes

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SESSION OVERVIEW

What You'll Learn

By the end of this session, you will be able to:



RECOGNIZE

Identify when a gathering is a Sunshine meeting, including regular, special, workshop, joint, emergency, and informal meetings.



OPEN

Understand public access, participation, accessibility, and meeting-location requirements.



NOTICE

Apply reasonable-notice principles, AGO guidance, and know what information the notice should include.



AGENDA

Distinguish Sunshine Law requirements from charter, ordinance, policy, and local agenda procedures.



MINUTES

Prepare compliant minutes and understand summary, action, transcript, and combination action + summary styles.



SUPPORT

Spot common Sunshine pitfalls and use practical clerk best practices to confidently support the board and public.

KEY TAKEAWAY: The clerk helps ensure the public can know about, attend, observe, participate in, and understand the work of its government.

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FOUNDATION

The Three Core Requirements of the Sunshine Law



OPEN

The public must be able to attend and observe.



NOTICE

Reasonable notice must be provided.



MINUTES

Written minutes must be promptly recorded and open to inspection.



Clerk lens: Before every meeting, ask, "Is it open?" Was it noticed? Who is taking the minutes?

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • § 286.011, Fla. Stat.

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MEETINGS

What Counts as a “Meeting”?

1. WHO?

Two or more members of the same board or commission.

2+

2. WHAT?

They discuss a matter that may foreseeably come before that board for action.

...

3. RESULT

The gathering is subject to Sunshine requirements — even if informal and even if no vote occurs.

*

No quorum is required. Discussion and deliberation are part of the decision-making process.

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • § 286.011, Fla. Stat.

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“any gathering ... where the members deal with some matter on which foreseeable action will be taken by the board”



It's not the setting that makes it a Sunshine meeting, it's the discussion.



Ask two questions:

1. Are two or more members of the same board involved?
2. Are they discussing a matter on which the board may take foreseeable action?



If yes → Sunshine requirements apply.



Formal action or a quorum is not required for Sunshine coverage.

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MEETINGS

Informal Communications Can Create Sunshine Problems

COMMON SITUATIONS

- A casual conversation before or after a meeting can become a Sunshine meeting if covered board business is discussed.
- Members should not use staff, another member, email, text, or other intermediaries to conduct a back-and-forth discussion outside a public meeting.

KEY TAKEAWAY

- **When in doubt, move the discussion to a properly noticed public meeting.**

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SOCIAL, CIVIC & COMMUNITY EVENTS

Same Place Does Not Automatically Mean a Sunshine Violation

Attendance at the same event is generally not prohibited. The key question is whether members discuss matters on which foreseeable board action may be taken.

✓ GENERALLY NOT A VIOLATION

Community Fundraiser

Two council members attend the same dinner and talk about family, vacations, the food, and the event. They do not discuss Council business.

Ribbon Cutting

Three council members attend, participate in the ceremony, take photos, and socialize. No matters that may foreseeably come before the Council are discussed among them.

⚠ LIKELY SUNSHINE VIOLATION

Community Fundraiser

Two council members begin discussing an upcoming agenda item and exchange their positions on whether the Council should approve it.

Ribbon Cutting

Two members discuss a proposed City project expected to come before Council and exchange opinions about how the Council should proceed.

CLERK TAKEAWAY: Same place ≠ Sunshine violation. Discussion of foreseeable board business = Sunshine concern.

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • Social gatherings / Informal discussions

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WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Sunshine Scenario: Legal - But How Does It Look?

Public trust, appearances, and conversations at community events.

THE SCENARIO

Several city council members attend the same community event. During the event, they gather away from the main crowd and are photographed having what appears to be a private conversation.

The photos circulate in the community. No evidence shows the members discussed an upcoming vote or another matter that may foreseeably come before the council. Still, residents begin asking: "What were they talking about?"

THE QUESTION

Sunshine violation or just bad optics?
What additional facts would you want to know?



THE LESSON

Same place ≠ Sunshine violation.
The legal concern is discussing foreseeable board business, but appearances can still affect public confidence.

CLERK TAKEAWAY: Don't only ask "Is it legal?" Also consider: "How will this look to the public?"

Training scenario • Focus on the discussion, not merely the setting.

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WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Your Clerk Radar Goes Off

You walk into the Council Chambers before the meeting and realize Council members may be discussing foreseeable board business.

THE SCENARIO

Three Council members are already seated and talking.

As you get closer, you hear a discussion about a City matter and think:

“Wait...isn’t that something that could come before Council?”

The public meeting has not been called to order.

1 RECOGNIZE

Two or more members of the same board + foreseeable board business = your Sunshine radar should go off.

2 SPEAK UP

Professionally interrupt and remind members to save the discussion for the public meeting.

3 DON'T JOIN IN

Don't answer the merits, relay positions, or help the conversation continue outside the public meeting.

4 GET GUIDANCE

If you believe a significant discussion occurred—or you are unsure- consult the City Attorney and follow local procedures.

A PROFESSIONAL WAY TO INTERRUPT:

“Council, I need to stop you for a moment. It sounds like this may be a matter that could come before Council. Let’s save that discussion for the public meeting.”

CLERK TAKEAWAY: You do not have to make the legal finding—but you should recognize the risk and respond appropriately.

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MEETING TYPES

Meeting Types: The Name Does Not Change the Rule

Regular meeting

Routine scheduled business; Sunshine applies.

Special meeting

Called outside the regular schedule; Sunshine applies and notice timing deserves special attention.

Workshop / work session

Discussion-only sessions are still meetings when foreseeable board business is discussed.

Joint meeting

If two boards meet together, notice should make the joint nature clear.

Emergency meeting

Still subject to Sunshine; provide the most appropriate and effective notice possible under the circumstances.

Social gathering

Not a Sunshine meeting only if board members do not discuss matters on which foreseeable action may be taken.

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MEETINGS

Open Means Meaningfully Open

ACCESS

The meeting venue must not unreasonably restrict public attendance. If a large turnout is expected, use a room large enough to accommodate it. If the largest available room is too small, provide an overflow area with live video and audio so the public can see and hear the meeting.

OBSERVE

The public must be able to hear and observe the proceedings. Avoid inaudible side conversations.

Be prepared to provide appropriate accommodations for persons with disabilities. For someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, this may include a qualified sign language interpreter, an assistive listening device, captioning, or another appropriate auxiliary aid or service.

PARTICIPATE

§ 286.0114 generally requires a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a proposition during the decision-making process and before official action. Public comment does not necessarily have to occur at every workshop if an opportunity is provided at another meeting within reasonable proximity before the board acts.

Clerk check: anticipated turnout • room capacity/overflow • ADA/accessibility • accommodation requests • audio/video • signage

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • §§ 286.011 & 286.0114, Fla. Stat.

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MEETING NOTICES

Notice Is More Than Posting a Date

- Notice must be given at a time and in a manner that enables the media and the public to attend.
- A meeting can require notice even when a quorum is not expected.
- A meeting's subject matter matters: issues of critical public concern may warrant broader notice.
- If a meeting is adjourned and reconvened later, evaluate whether new notice is required rather than assuming the original notice carries forward.
- Paid advertising may be required by another statute, code, charter, or ordinance — Sunshine notice does not replace those requirements.



**Notice is not a formality.
It is what makes attendance possible.**

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • § 286.01, Fla. Stat.

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MEETING NOTICES

What Should the Notice Include?



CORE INFORMATION

- Name of the Board/Body
- Date and time
- Meeting location
- Agenda, if available or a general subject-matter statement

CLERK BEST PRACTICE

- Clear identification of a joint meeting, when applicable
- Accessibility/accommodation information required by applicable law/policy
- Any additional statutory notice language for the subject matter
- Website posting plus prominent posting at the agency, consistent with local practice

AGO guidance emphasizes that notice must reasonably convey the information required by the circumstances and afford interested persons a reasonable time to attend. See AGO 73-170 and the 2025 Sunshine Manual.

Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes, requires a conspicuous appeal/verbatim-record advisory in notices of meetings or hearings when notice is required, subject to the statutory exception for notice under s. 200.065(3).

IMPORTANT FOR CLERKS: a meeting notice is not necessarily the same as a statutory legal advertisement. Budget, land-use, comprehensive plan, zoning, taxation, and other hearings may have separate requirements for content, publication, timing, size, or placement. If another statute prescribes notice, that requirement must also be followed.

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • § 286.011, Fla. Stat.

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MEETING NOTICES

Reasonable Notice: A Fact-Specific Standard



There is no single statutory timeframe for every Sunshine meeting. Notice must be given at a time and in a manner that enables the media and interested members of the public to attend.

REGULAR

Manual guideline: except for emergency or special meetings, provide notice at least 7 days before the meeting.

SPECIAL

Manual guideline: no less than 24 hours; preferably at least 72 hours.

EMERGENCY

Give the most appropriate and effective notice possible under the circumstances.

CLERK TIP: AGO timeframes are guidelines, not universal statutory deadlines. Always check other statutes, charter provisions, ordinances, rules, or local policies that may require specific or longer notice.

Reasonableness test: Was the notice reasonably calculated to timely inform the public and give interested persons a meaningful opportunity to attend?

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • § 286.011, Fla. Stat.

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WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Sunshine Scenario: The Notice Was Posted...But Was It Enough?

Reasonable notice and looking at the posting from the public's perspective.

THE SCENARIO

For several months, a municipality has posted a standard notice outside City Hall listing upcoming council meeting dates.

But the notice does not include the meeting times. Sometimes a second nearby notice includes times, but it still shows dates from the previous year.

A resident sees one notice with the correct date but no time, and another with a time but the wrong year.

THE QUESTION

Would you know when the meeting was actually taking place?

Would this give the public a meaningful opportunity to attend?

WHAT SHOULD YOU CHECK?

WHO is meeting?

WHEN?

WHERE?

WHAT is being considered?

Is the information current and easy to find?

CLERK TAKEAWAY: Posting something is not the goal. Providing useful, reasonable notice is.

Clerk practice: use a template • verify before posting • remove outdated notices • check physical and online postings

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AGENDA BASICS

Understanding the Purpose of a Municipal Agenda

An agenda is the meeting's roadmap a planning and communication tool that organizes the business of the governing body and helps everyone understand what is happening and why.

ORGANIZATION

Creates a clear sequence of business, reduces confusion, and helps ensure each matter receives appropriate attention.

TRANSPARENCY

Tells officials, staff, media, and the public what the body expects to discuss so they can review information and prepare.

DECISION-MAKING

Keeps the meeting focused and places hearings, presentations, discussion, and action items in a logical order.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Documents what was planned for the meeting and creates a useful reference for actions, follow-up, and the historical record.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Helps residents identify matters important to them, review supporting materials, and prepare to participate when appropriate.

MINUTES ROADMAP

A well-structured agenda gives the clerk a framework for the minutes—each agenda item becomes a natural section of the record.

FLORIDA NOTE: The Sunshine Law does not require every item of business to appear on a published agenda. Agenda requirements may also come from statutes, charter provisions, ordinances, rules, or local procedures.

2025 Sunshine Manual • AGO 75-305 • Hough v. Stembridge

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AGENDA DESIGN

Building a Clear, Usable Municipal Agenda

Exact components vary by municipality and meeting type, but a practical agenda usually moves from meeting information → opening → public/business items → reports → adjournment.

COMMON AGENDA COMPONENTS

1. Meeting header — municipality/body, meeting type, date, time & location
2. Call to order and roll call / quorum
3. Public hearings and public comment, as applicable
4. Consent agenda, if used
5. Old / unfinished business
6. New business and action items
7. Reports, presentations and informational items
8. Adjournment

CLERK BEST PRACTICES

Prioritize key items

Consider time-sensitive matters and attendees who may be present for a specific item.

Use plain language

Avoid unexplained acronyms, jargon, and vague titles in a public-facing agenda.

Include supporting materials

Provide the packet or relevant reports when permitted and available so participants can prepare.

Plan for time

Allow adequate time for hearings, presentations, complex discussions, and public participation.

Be consistent

Use a predictable format and numbering system so the board and public can easily follow the meeting.

Clerk connection: A clear agenda makes a clear meeting and usually makes accurate minutes much easier to prepare.

Always check Florida law and your municipality's charter, ordinances, policies, and adopted rules of procedure.

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SAMPLE AGENDAS

CITY OF EAGLE LAKE
REGULAR CITY COMMISSION MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 4, 2026
7:00 P.M.
TO BE HELD IN THE COMMISSION CHAMBERS
LOCATED AT 675 E EAGLE AVE
EAGLE LAKE, FLORIDA 33839

AGENDA

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. INVOCATION

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. ROLL CALL

V. AUDIENCE

VI. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS/PROCLAMATIONS, REQUESTS

- A. Staff Reports
- B. City Manager Report
- C. Proclamation - Municipal Clerk's Week, May 3, 2026 through May 9, 2026
- D. Proclamation - National Police Officer Memorial Week, May 11, 2026 through May 16, 2026
- E. Proclamation - National Public Works Week, May 17, 2026 through May 23, 2026

VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. Consideration of the first reading of **Ordinance No. O-26-06**, An Ordinance Amending the City of Eagle Lake, Florida Ordinance No. O-22-18, As Amended by Ordinance No. O-26-04, to Provide for a Minor Modification of the Approved Planned Unit Development/Housing (PUD) to add Eight Units to the Same Certain Parcels, Revealing All Ordinances in Conflict Herewith, and Providing an Effective Date. (General Location: four parcels of land totaling approximately 20.12 acres in size, lying east of Eagle Pines Blvd and North of Golden Bole Dr, with a street address of 181 Gilbert St, Eagle Lake, Florida 33839 and O Gilbert St, Winter Haven, FL 33880) Day-Nation Inc. Property
- B. Consideration of the first reading of **Ordinance No. O-26-08**, An Ordinance of the City Commission of the City of Eagle Lake, Florida, Relating to Mandatory Structural Inspections for Condominium and Cooperative Buildings, Implementing Subsection 558.89(1)(1), Florida Statutes (2025), Amending the Code of Ordinances to Create and Adopt Article V to Chapter 2 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Eagle Lake, Florida, Requiring Condominiums, Cooperative Associations, and Owner-Subject to Mandatory Structural Inspections to Submit a Compliance Request for Substantial Structural Deterioration Within 365 Days After the City's Receipt of a Phase Two Inspection Report, Providing for Conflicts, Providing for Severability, Providing for the Administrative Correction of Scrivener's Errors, Providing for Codification, and Providing an Effective Date.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Consideration of Agreement for Transfer of Public Roads between the City of Eagle Lake, Florida and Polk County, Florida, (For a Portion of Gilbert Street from the Easterly Right-of-Way of Cameron Road to Dead End East, in Eagle Lake, Polk County, Florida)
- B. Consideration of Authorizing City Manager to Hire Building Official

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- C. Consideration of **Resolution No. R-26-07**, A Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Eagle Lake, Florida, Approving to Purchase the Full Price Between Killebrew, Inc. and Polk County, Florida, for Necessary Flow Meter Removal/Replacement to Improve the Accuracy of Wastewater Flow Calculations for Determining Volume Based Payments by the City of Eagle Lake to the City of Bartow Pursuant to Interlocal Agreement Whereby the City of Bartow Accepts and Treats Eagle Lake Wastewater, Authorizing the City Manager to Execute Said Contract, Providing for Implementing Actions, Providing for Severability, Providing for Conflicts, and Providing an Effective Date.

X. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of the Regular City Commission Minutes 04/20/2026
- B. Approval of the Bid Date List in the amount of \$382.56

XI. CITY ATTORNEY

- A. Request Authorization to Update Hearing Procedures for Legislative and Quasi-Judicial Matters

XII. CITY COMMISSION

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Please be advised that if you desire to appeal any decisions made as a result of the above hearing or meeting, you will need a record of the proceedings and in some cases a verbatim record is required. You must make your own arrangements to produce this record. (Florida Statute 286.0105)

If you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the City Clerk's Office at 75 North Seventh Street, P.O. Box 129, Eagle Lake, Florida 33839 or phone (863) 293-4141 within 2 working days of your receipt of this meeting notification, if you are hearing or voice impaired, call 1-800-955-8771.

POSTED AT CITY HALL AND THE EAGLE LAKE POST OFFICE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2026
BY CITY CLERK DAWN WRIGHT, NMC, FCMA, FRBP

City of Gulf Breeze
Agenda
City of Dade
City

Always check Florida law and your municipality's charter, ordinances, policies, and adopted rules of procedure.

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AGENDAS

Agenda Requirements: Sunshine vs. Local Rules



WHAT SUNSHINE REQUIRES

The Sunshine Law itself does not require every item of business to appear on a published agenda before it may be discussed at a properly noticed public meeting.

WHAT THE CLERK MUST ALSO CHECK

Other statutes, the city charter, ordinances, resolutions, adopted rules of procedure, and special hearing requirements may impose agenda or notice rules that are stricter.

Best practice: Give the public meaningful advance information about what the board expects to consider.

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • § 286.011, Fla. Stat.

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AGENDAS

The “Not on the Agenda” Question

?

Can the board discuss or act on an item that was not listed?

UNDER SUNSHINE ALONE

The Sunshine Law does not require every item of business to be listed on a published agenda before it may be discussed or considered at a properly noticed, open public meeting.

BUT USE CAUTION

Before proceeding with an unlisted item, ask: Is it controversial or a matter of critical public concern?

Does another statute require specific notice?

Does our charter, ordinance, policy, or rules of procedure require agenda placement?

Would taking action deprive the public of meaningful notice of an important matter?

Clerk Best Practice: When in doubt, especially on a significant or controversial matter, consider postponing action and placing the item on a properly noticed agenda.

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • § 286.011, Fla. Stat.

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MINUTES

Minutes Are Required for Every Sunshine Meeting



WRITTEN

Minutes must exist in written form. A recording alone does not satisfy the statutory minutes requirement.

PROMPT

Minutes must be “promptly recorded.” The AGO says “promptly” carries its ordinary meaning: done at once or without delay. Florida law does not establish a fixed number of days.

PUBLIC

Once the person responsible for preparing the minutes has done so, the minutes become public records even before distribution to board members or formal approval.

Do not withhold prepared minutes until the next meeting. AGO 91-26

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MINUTES

What Should Minutes Capture?

CORE RECORD

- 1 A brief written summary or series of notes reflecting the events of the meeting, not a verbatim transcript.
- 2 The board/body, date, time, and place; members present/absent; and enough context to understand the business conducted.
- 3 Motions, seconds (if your procedure uses them), the action taken, and the vote/result.
- 4 Public hearings, presentations, public comment, and other proceedings at a level appropriate to your local minute style.
- 5 Any required disclosures, recusals/abstentions, or forms should be handled under the applicable voting/conflict statutes and local procedure.

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MINUTES

Common Types of Meeting Minutes

SUMMARY MINUTES

Capture the substance of the meeting in a concise narrative: major points discussed, key information presented, decisions reached, and actions taken. They summarize—not transcribe—what occurred.



ACTION MINUTES

Focus primarily on what the body DID: motions, seconds (if used), amendments, votes, decisions, assignments, and other formal action. Discussion is recorded only when needed to explain the action.



TRANSCRIPT / VERBATIM MINUTES

A word-for-word written record of the proceedings. Florida's Sunshine Law does NOT require a verbatim transcript, although a board may choose to use a written transcript as its minutes.



COMBINATION: ACTION + SUMMARY

Records the formal action and vote, while also providing a brief, objective summary of the discussion that led to the decision. This gives readers context without creating a transcript.



Clerk Tip: Choose a consistent minute style that meets your board's needs and local policy. Whatever the style, minutes should be clear, objective, accurate, and focused on the meeting—not editorial commentary.

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • AGO 82-47 • § 286.011(2), Fla. Stat.

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MINUTES IN PRACTICE

Summary Minutes vs. Action Minutes

Same agenda item. Different level of detail.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Park Improvement Project

The Council discussed the proposed park improvements, project costs, and construction schedule. Staff responded to questions regarding available funding and anticipated completion. Following discussion, the Council approved the project.

FOCUS: Substance and context.

ACTION MINUTES

Park Improvement Project

Councilmember Smith moved to award the Park Improvement Project contract to ABC Construction in the amount of \$425,000. Councilmember Jones seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

FOCUS: What the governing body did.

Teaching point: Summary minutes tell the reader more about the discussion. Action minutes concentrate on motions, votes, decisions, and formal action.

Keep the language objective. Minutes are the record of the meeting—not the clerk's commentary.

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MINUTES

Recordings, Transcripts & Minutes Are Not the Same

AUDIO / VIDEO

Useful for accuracy and may be a public record, but a recording does not substitute for the written minutes required by § 286.011(2).



TRANSCRIPT

A transcript can provide a detailed record, but the Manual distinguishes transcripts from the statutory minutes requirement.



MINUTES

The official written summary of the meeting. Follow your agency's approval and retention practices.



Clerk tip: Use the recording as a drafting tool; do not write a transcript unless one is specifically needed.

2025 Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual • § 286.011, Fla. Stat.

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PRACTICAL CHECKLIST

A New Clerk's Meeting Workflow



- 1 **BEFORE** Confirm legal notice requirements; prepare/post notice; finalize agenda/packet; confirm room/accessibility.
- 2 **AT START** Record date/time/place, attendance, quorum, and opening formalities.
- 3 **DURING** Track motions, amendments, votes, direction/consensus, public hearings, and key procedural events.
- 4 **AFTER** Draft minutes promptly; route for review/approval under local practice; publish/provide access; retain records.

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PRACTICAL

Common Clerk Traps



“It’s only a workshop.”

Workshops can be Sunshine meetings.

“There won’t be a quorum.”

A quorum is not required for Sunshine to apply.

“Everyone already knows about it.”

General knowledge is not a substitute for reasonable notice.

“It wasn’t on the agenda, so it can’t be discussed.”

Not necessarily under Sunshine alone; check other law and local rules.

“We recorded it, so we don’t need minutes.”

Written minutes are still required.

“They’re just chatting before the meeting.”

If foreseeable board business is discussed, the conversation may be covered.

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CLERK TOOLKIT

Know Your Tools

Good clerks do not have to know every answer from memory—they need to know where to find reliable answers.

THE CLERK’S REFERENCE TOOL

[Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual](#)

A practical reference published by the Florida Attorney General that brings together Florida’s Sunshine Law and Public Records Law, court decisions, Attorney General opinions, and frequently encountered questions.

Use it to research—not to replace legal counsel.

GOVERNMENT-IN- THE-SUNSHINE MANUAL



2025 Edition

*A Reference For Compliance
with Florida’s Public Records
and Open Meetings Laws*



Florida Office of the Attorney General

Volume 47

This is one of the clerk’s most-used starting references. It explains the law in practical terms, Points you to statutes, cases & AG opinions, helps answer everyday meeting questions, provides citations for deeper research, and builds confidence when unusual issues come up.

Florida Attorney General • Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual

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CLERK TOOLKIT

Agenda & Meeting Management Tools

Technology can streamline the meeting lifecycle—from agenda-item submission through publishing the final minutes.

PRE- MEETING PREPARATION

- Agenda item creation & Approval workflows
- Packet Assembly
- Electronic Agendas
- Board Materials
- Public notice/publishing

DURING THE MEETING

- Presentations & documents
- Speaker / public comment tools
- Motions and voting
- Public portals & accessibility
- Audio or video integration

POST MEETING & PUBLISHING

- Meeting Minutes
- AI-supported minutes
- Action item tracking
- Searchable archives
- Public access to records
- Public transparency

Before you choose, ask: Does the tool fit OUR workflow, approval process, accessibility needs, records responsibilities, security requirements, and public-facing expectations?

Examples—not endorsements. Evaluate features, records retention, accessibility, integrations, security, support, and cost.

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CLERK TOOLKIT

AI Can Assist With Minutes — The Clerk Still Owns the Record

AI can reduce drafting time, but it should be treated as an assistant—not the official minute taker.

AI CAN HELP

Transcribe or organize meeting audio

- Summarize lengthy discussions; identify motions, votes & action items
- Turn rough notes into a draft
- Improve grammar and consistency
- Compare a draft to a transcript or notes

THE CLERK MUST VERIFY

AI can mishear names, numbers, motions, speakers, legal terms, and vote results.

Always verify against:

- Your notes
- Agenda/packet
- Recording or transcript
- Motions & votes
- Required disclosures
- Never publish an AI draft without human review.

PROTECT THE RECORD

Before uploading audio, transcripts, packets, or other records:

- Follow agency policy
- Understand privacy & security settings
- Consider confidential/exempt information
- Know retention implications
- Use an agency-approved account/tool

The clerk remains responsible for the accuracy of the official minutes.

AI = FIRST DRAFT. CLERK = JUDGMENT + VERIFICATION + OFFICIAL RECORD.

Use only in accordance with your agency's technology, records, privacy, and security policies.

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BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The Clerk's Meeting Playbook

A successful public meeting is built before the gavel falls—and completed only when the record is accurate and accessible.

1 RECOGNIZE THE MEETING

Know when Sunshine applies. Focus on who is communicating and whether foreseeable board business is being discussed.

2 OPEN THE DOOR

Make the meeting meaningfully open: appropriate location, public access, accessibility, ability to observe, and participation as required.

3 GIVE REASONABLE NOTICE

Provide timely, useful notice. Ask: Would an interested member of the public know enough—and soon enough—to attend?

4 BUILD THE ROADMAP

Use a clear agenda to organize business, support transparency, focus decision-making, and help the public follow the meeting.

5 CREATE THE RECORD

Promptly prepare clear, objective written minutes. Capture the action and enough context to understand what occurred.

6 USE YOUR TOOLS

Use the Sunshine Manual, your attorney, agenda software, recordings, and AI appropriately—but verify the law and the official record.

THE CLERK'S CHECK

OPEN • NOTICED • ACCESSIBLE • ORGANIZED • PARTICIPATORY • DOCUMENTED

Florida Sunshine Law: open meetings • reasonable notice • written minutes

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THE CLERK'S SUNSHINE CHECK

When in doubt, protect the public process

- ✓ Is this a gathering of covered board members?
- ✓ Could foreseeable board business be discussed?
- ✓ Was reasonable notice provided?
- ✓ Can the public meaningfully attend and observe?
- ✓ Are written minutes being taken?
- ✓ Is there another statute or local rule I need to check?

The Clerk's Role Matters

— Closing thought for municipal clerks

You do not have to know every answer. Know where to look, ask questions, verify the rules, and keep learning.

ONE LAST THOUGHT

"Transparency does not happen by accident. It is built—one notice, one agenda, one meeting, and one accurate record at a time."



KNOW THE RULES



USE YOUR RESOURCES



TRUST THE PROCESS



SERVE THE PUBLIC

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REFERENCES

Primary Resources

Click a resource below to open the official source online.



PRIMARY RESOURCES

- 01 ➤ [2025 Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual](#)
- 02 ➤ [Florida Statutes — Chapter 286](#)
- 03 ➤ [§ § 286.011 — Public Meetings & Minutes](#)



SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- 04 ➤ [§ § 286.0114 — Opportunity to Be Heard](#)
- 05 ➤ [§ § 286.0105 — Appeal / Verbatim Record Notice](#)
- 06 ➤ [§ § AGO 75-305 — Acting on Matter Not on Agenda](#)



Primary source: Florida Attorney General, 2025 Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual

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THANK YOU

Leslie Guyer, MMC

City Clerk | City of Gulf Breeze

lguyer@gulfbreeze.fl.gov

850-934-5134 or 850-485-4196 (c)

CITY OF GULF BREEZE, FLORIDA

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