

CHAPTER 14

AN ACT

HB 4117

Relating to public meetings; creating new provisions; amending ORS 192.660, 244.280, 244.282 and 244.284; and declaring an emergency.

Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:

SECTION 1. Section 2 of this 2024 Act and ORS 192.672 are added to and made a part of ORS 192.610 to 192.705.

SECTION 2. Any person may submit to the Oregon Government Ethics Commission:

(1) A written request for the commission to issue and publish a commission advisory opinion under ORS 244.280 on the application of ORS 192.610 to 192.705 to any actual or hypothetical circumstance;

(2) A written request for the executive director of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission to issue and publish a staff advisory opinion under ORS 244.282 on the application of ORS 192.610 to 192.705 to any actual or hypothetical circumstance; or

(3) A written or oral request for the executive director or other staff of the commission to issue written or oral staff advice under ORS 244.284 on the application of ORS 192.610 to 192.705 to any actual or hypothetical circumstance.

SECTION 3. ORS 244.280 is amended to read:

244.280. (1) Upon the written request of any person, or upon its own motion, the Oregon Government Ethics Commission, under signature of the chairperson, may issue and publish written commission advisory opinions on the application of ORS [192.660] **192.610 to 192.705** or any provision of this chapter to any proposed transaction or action or any actual or hypothetical circumstance. A commission advisory opinion, and a decision by the commission to issue an advisory opinion on its own motion, must be approved by a majority of the members of the commission. Legal counsel to the commission shall review a proposed commission advisory opinion before the opinion is considered by the commission.

(2) Not later than 60 days after the date the commission receives the written request for a commission advisory opinion, the commission shall issue either the opinion or a written denial of the request. The written denial shall explain the reasons for the denial. The commission may ask the person requesting the advisory opinion to supply additional information the commission considers necessary to render the opinion. The commission, by vote of a majority of the members of the commission, may extend the 60-day deadline by one period not to exceed 60 days.

(3) Except as provided in this subsection, unless the commission advisory opinion is revised or re-

voked, the commission may not impose a penalty under ORS 244.350 or 244.360 on a person for any good faith action the person takes in reliance on an advisory opinion issued under this section. The commission may impose a penalty under ORS 244.350 or 244.360 on the person who requested the advisory opinion if the commission determines that the person omitted or misstated material facts in making the request.

SECTION 4. ORS 244.282 is amended to read:

244.282. (1) Upon the written request of any person, the executive director of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission may issue and publish written staff advisory opinions on the application of ORS [192.660] **192.610 to 192.705** or any provision of this chapter to any proposed transaction or action or any actual or hypothetical circumstance.

(2) Not later than 30 days after the date the executive director receives the written request for a staff advisory opinion, the executive director shall issue either the opinion or a written denial of the request. The written denial shall explain the reasons for the denial. The executive director may ask the person requesting the advisory opinion to supply additional information the executive director considers necessary to render the opinion. The executive director may extend the 30-day deadline by one period not to exceed 30 days. The executive director shall clearly designate an opinion issued under this section as a staff advisory opinion.

(3)(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this subsection, unless the staff advisory opinion is revised or revoked, the commission may only issue a written letter of reprimand, explanation or education for any good faith action a person takes in reliance on a staff advisory opinion issued under this section.

(b) The commission may impose, for an action that is subject to a penalty and that is taken in reliance on a staff advisory opinion issued under this section, a penalty under ORS 244.350 or 244.360 on the person who requested the opinion if the commission determines that the person omitted or misstated material facts in making the request.

(4) At each regular meeting of the commission, the executive director shall report to the commission on all staff advisory opinions issued since the last regular meeting of the commission. The commission on its own motion may issue a commission advisory opinion under ORS 244.280 on the same facts or circumstances that form the basis for any staff advisory opinion.

SECTION 5. ORS 244.284 is amended to read:

244.284. (1) Upon the written or oral request of any person, the executive director or other staff of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission may issue written or oral staff advice on the application of ORS [192.660] **192.610 to 192.705** or any provision of this chapter to any proposed transaction or action or any actual or hypothetical circumstance. Any written advice not designated as a staff advisory

opinion under ORS 244.282 is considered staff advice issued under this section.

(2) Before imposing any penalty under ORS 244.350 or 244.360, the commission may consider whether the action that may be subject to penalty was taken in reliance on staff advice issued under this section.

SECTION 6. ORS 192.660 is amended to read:

192.660. (1) ORS 192.610 to 192.705 do not prevent the governing body of a public body from holding executive session during a regular, special or emergency meeting, after the presiding officer has identified the authorization under ORS 192.610 to 192.705 for holding the executive session.

(2) The governing body of a public body may hold an executive session:

(a) To consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent.

(b) To consider the dismissal or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent who does not request an open hearing.

(c) To consider matters pertaining to the function of the medical staff of a public hospital licensed pursuant to ORS 441.015 to 441.119 and 441.993 including, but not limited to, all clinical committees, executive, credentials, utilization review, peer review committees and all other matters relating to medical competency in the hospital.

(d) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to carry on labor negotiations.

(e) To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions.

(f) To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection.

(g) To consider preliminary negotiations involving matters of trade or commerce in which the governing body is in competition with governing bodies in other states or nations.

(h) To consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.

(i) To review and evaluate the employment-related performance of the chief executive officer of any public body, a public officer, employee or staff member who does not request an open hearing.

(j) To carry on negotiations under ORS chapter 293 with private persons or businesses regarding proposed acquisition, exchange or liquidation of public investments.

(k) To consider matters relating to school safety or a plan that responds to safety threats made toward a school.

(L) If the governing body is a health professional regulatory board, to consider information obtained as part of an investigation of licensee or applicant conduct.

(m) If the governing body is the State Landscape Architect Board, or an advisory committee to the

board, to consider information obtained as part of an investigation of registrant or applicant conduct.

(n) To discuss information about review or approval of programs relating to the security of any of the following:

(A) A nuclear-powered thermal power plant or nuclear installation.

(B) Transportation of radioactive material derived from or destined for a nuclear-fueled thermal power plant or nuclear installation.

(C) Generation, storage or conveyance of:

(i) Electricity;

(ii) Gas in liquefied or gaseous form;

(iii) Hazardous substances as defined in ORS 453.005 (7)(a), (b) and (d);

(iv) Petroleum products;

(v) Sewage; or

(vi) Water.

(D) Telecommunication systems, including cellular, wireless or radio systems.

(E) Data transmissions by whatever means provided.

(o) To consider matters relating to the safety of the governing body and of public body staff and volunteers and the security of public body facilities and meeting spaces.

(p) To consider matters relating to cyber security infrastructure and responses to cyber security threats.

(3) Labor negotiations shall be conducted in open meetings unless negotiators for both sides request that negotiations be conducted in executive session. Labor negotiations conducted in executive session are not subject to the notification requirements of ORS 192.640.

(4) Representatives of the news media shall be allowed to attend executive sessions other than those held under subsection (2)(d) of this section relating to labor negotiations or executive session held pursuant to ORS 332.061 (2) but the governing body may require that specified information be undisclosed.

(5) When a governing body convenes an executive session under subsection (2)(h) of this section relating to conferring with counsel on current litigation or litigation likely to be filed, the governing body shall bar any member of the news media from attending the executive session if the member of the news media is a party to the litigation or is an employee, agent or contractor of a news media organization that is a party to the litigation.

(6) No executive session may be held for the purpose of taking any final action or making any final decision.

(7) The exception granted by subsection (2)(a) of this section does not apply to:

(a) The filling of a vacancy in an elective office.

(b) The filling of a vacancy on any public committee, commission or other advisory group.

(c) The consideration of general employment policies.

(d) The employment of the chief executive officer, other public officers, employees and staff members of a public body unless:

(A) The public body has advertised the vacancy;

(B) The public body has adopted regular hiring procedures;

(C) In the case of an officer, the public has had the opportunity to comment on the employment of the officer; and

(D) In the case of a chief executive officer, the governing body has adopted hiring standards, criteria and policy directives in meetings open to the public in which the public has had the opportunity to comment on the standards, criteria and policy directives.

(8) A governing body may not use an executive session for purposes of evaluating a chief executive officer or other officer, employee or staff member to conduct a general evaluation of an agency goal, objective or operation or any directive to personnel concerning agency goals, objectives, operations or programs.

(9) Notwithstanding subsections (2) and (6) of this section and ORS 192.650:

(a) ORS 676.175 governs the public disclosure of minutes, transcripts or recordings relating to the substance and disposition of licensee or applicant conduct investigated by a health professional regulatory board.

(b) ORS 671.338 governs the public disclosure of minutes, transcripts or recordings relating to the substance and disposition of registrant or applicant

conduct investigated by the State Landscape Architect Board or an advisory committee to the board.

[(10) Any person may submit to the Oregon Government Ethics Commission:]

[(a) A written request for the commission to issue and publish a commission advisory opinion under ORS 244.280 on the application of this section to any actual or hypothetical circumstance;]

[(b) A written request for the executive director of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission to issue and publish a staff advisory opinion under ORS 244.282 on the application of this section to any actual or hypothetical circumstance; or]

[(c) A written or oral request for the executive director or other staff of the commission to issue written or oral staff advice under ORS 244.284 on the application of this section to any actual or hypothetical circumstance.]

[(11)] (10) Notwithstanding ORS 244.290, the Oregon Government Ethics Commission may not adopt rules that establish what entities are considered representatives of the news media that are entitled to attend executive sessions under subsection (4) of this section.

SECTION 7. This 2024 Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is declared to exist, and this 2024 Act takes effect on its passage.

Approved by the Governor March 20, 2024
 Filed in the office of Secretary of State March 20, 2024
 Effective date March 20, 2024