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SENATE BILL NO. 876

Offered January 8, 2025

Prefiled January 3, 2025

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 2.2-3707 and 22.1-346.2 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Virginia Freedom of Information Act; notice of public meetings; proposed agenda required.

Patron—Ebbin

Referred to Committee on General Laws and Technology

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That §§ 2.2-3707 and 22.1-346.2 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 2.2-3707. Meetings to be public; notice of meetings; recordings; minutes.**

A. All meetings of public bodies shall be open, except as provided in §§ 2.2-3707.01 and 2.2-3711.

B. All state public bodies subject to the provisions of this chapter:

1. May allow public access to their meetings through electronic communication means, including telephone or videoconferencing, if already used by the state public body;

2. May provide the public with the opportunity to comment through the use of such electronic communication means at such meetings at the point when public comment is customarily received; and

3. Shall otherwise comply with the provisions of this chapter.

No cause of action shall arise against a state public body for accidental or involuntary loss of audio or video signal or inability of the public to comment through the electronic communications means described in this subsection.

C. No meeting shall be conducted through telephonic, video, electronic, or other electronic communication means where the members are not physically assembled to discuss or transact public business, except as provided in §§ 2.2-3708.2 and 2.2-3708.3 or as may be specifically provided in Title 54.1 for the summary suspension of professional licenses.

D. Every public body shall give notice of the date, time, location, and remote location, if required, of its meetings by:

1. Posting such notice on its official public government website, if any;

2. Placing such notice in a prominent public location at which notices are regularly posted; and

3. Placing such notice at the office of the clerk of the public body or, in the case of a public body that has no clerk, at the office of the chief administrator.

All state public bodies subject to the provisions of this chapter shall also post notice of their meetings on a central, publicly available electronic calendar maintained by the Commonwealth. Publication of meeting notices by electronic means by other public bodies shall be encouraged.

The notice shall include a proposed agenda listing all items expected to be considered by the public body at the meeting. Agenda items shall be sufficiently descriptive to give the public reasonable notice of the matters to be considered at the meeting. Amendments to the proposed agenda may be made prior to the meeting, but the public body shall not take any final action on those amended or additional agenda items. The proposed agendas for meetings of state public bodies where at least one member has been appointed by the Governor shall state whether or not public comment will be received at the meeting and, if so, the approximate point during the meeting when public comment will be received.

The notice shall be posted at least three working days prior to the meeting.

E. Notice, reasonable under the circumstance, of special, emergency, or continued meetings shall be given contemporaneously with the notice provided to the members of the public body conducting the meeting.

F. Any person may annually file a written request for notification with a public body. The request shall include the requester's name, address, zip code, daytime telephone number, electronic mail address, if available, and organization, if any. The public body receiving such request shall provide notice of all meetings directly to each such person. Without objection by the person, the public body may provide electronic notice of all meetings in response to such requests.

G. At least one copy of ~~the proposed agenda and~~ all agenda packets and, unless exempt, all materials furnished to members of a public body for a meeting shall be made available for public inspection at the same time such documents are furnished to the members of the public body. ~~The proposed agendas for meetings of state public bodies where at least one member has been appointed by the Governor shall state whether or not public comment will be received at the meeting and, if so, the approximate point during the meeting when public comment will be received.~~

H. Any person may photograph, film, record, or otherwise reproduce any portion of a meeting required to be open. The public body conducting the meeting may adopt rules governing the placement and use of

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equipment necessary for broadcasting, photographing, filming, or recording a meeting to prevent interference with the proceedings, but shall not prohibit or otherwise prevent any person from photographing, filming, recording, or otherwise reproducing any portion of a meeting required to be open. No public body shall conduct a meeting required to be open in any building or facility where such recording devices are prohibited.

I. Minutes shall be taken at all open meetings. However, minutes shall not be required to be taken at deliberations of (i) standing and other committees of the General Assembly; (ii) legislative interim study commissions and committees, including the Virginia Code Commission; (iii) study committees or commissions appointed by the Governor; or (iv) study commissions or study committees, or any other committees or subcommittees appointed by the governing bodies or school boards of counties, cities, and towns, except where the membership of any such commission, committee, or subcommittee includes a majority of the governing body of the county, city, or town or school board.

Minutes, including draft minutes, and all other records of open meetings, including audio or audio/visual records shall be deemed public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter.

Minutes shall be in writing and shall include (a) the date, time, and location of the meeting; (b) the members of the public body recorded as present and absent; and (c) a summary of the discussion on matters proposed, deliberated, or decided, and a record of any votes taken. In addition, for electronic communication meetings conducted in accordance with § 2.2-3708.2 or 2.2-3708.3, minutes shall include (1) the identity of the members of the public body who participated in the meeting through electronic communication means, (2) the identity of the members of the public body who were physically assembled at one physical location, and (3) the identity of the members of the public body who were not present at the location identified in clause (2) but who monitored such meeting through electronic communication means.

§ 22.1-346.2. Board of Visitors of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind established.

A. As used in this section:

"Deaf" means having a hearing impairment so severe as to impair the individual from processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects such individual's educational performance.

"Hard of hearing" means having an impairment in hearing in one or both ears, with or without amplification, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects an individual's educational performance. "Hard of hearing" does not include "deaf."

"Vision impaired" means having an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects an individual's educational performance. "Vision impaired" includes both having partial sight and blindness.

B. There is hereby established the Board of Visitors of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (Board of Visitors), as a policy agency in the executive branch of state government under the name of the "Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind," for the purpose of governing the educational programs and services to deaf, blind, and multi-disabled students enrolled at the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind.

C. The Board of Visitors shall have a total membership of 15 members that shall consist of four legislative members and 11 nonlegislative citizen members. Members shall be appointed as follows: two members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; two members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; and 11 nonlegislative citizen members, of whom two shall be parents of current students at the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind, of whom (i) one shall be the parent of a student who is deaf or hard of hearing and one shall be the parent of a student who is vision impaired and (ii) one shall represent the Eastern region of the Commonwealth and one shall represent the Western region of the Commonwealth, two shall be representatives of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind Alumni Association who are deaf or hard of hearing, and two shall be representatives of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind Alumni Association who are vision impaired, to be appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. Nonlegislative citizen members of the Board of Visitors shall be citizens of the Commonwealth. Legislative members of the Board of Visitors shall serve terms coincident with their terms of office. After the initial staggering of terms, nonlegislative members appointed shall serve for four-year terms. Appointments to fill vacancies, other than by expiration of a term, shall be for the unexpired terms. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments. All members may be reappointed. However, no House member shall serve more than four consecutive two-year terms, no Senate member shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms, and no nonlegislative member appointed by the Governor shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms. The remainder of any term to which a member is appointed to fill a vacancy shall not constitute a term in determining the member's eligibility for reappointment.

The Board of Visitors shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its membership. The Board of Visitors shall elect a secretary, who shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings of the Board of Visitors and of the executive committee if one is created by the Board of Visitors, and such other officers as the Board deems appropriate. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum. The Board of Visitors shall meet no less than four times each year. The meetings of the Board of Visitors shall be held at the call of

the chairman or whenever the majority of the members so request. Notice of all meetings shall be made in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.). Notice of meetings to the public shall, pursuant to subsection *G D* of § 2.2-3707, state whether public comment will be received at the meeting and, if so, the approximate point during the meeting when public comment will be received. At any meeting at which public comment will be received, each speaker shall be allotted three minutes to speak. To ensure that all interested parties are given reasonable opportunity to be heard, the time allotted for each speaker to give public comment shall not be limited extemporaneously or without adequate notice prior to the date on which such meeting is scheduled.

D. Legislative members of the Board of Visitors shall receive such compensation as provided in § 30-19.12, and nonlegislative citizen members shall receive such compensation for the performance of their duties as provided in § 2.2-2813. All members shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813 and 2.2-2825. Funding for the costs of expenses of the members shall be provided from such funds as may be appropriated to the Board of Visitors, in accordance with the appropriations act.

E. The Superintendent shall designate a member of the staff of the Department to serve as a consultant to the Board of Visitors on matters pertaining to instruction, federal and state special education requirements, and school accreditation, and to provide technical assistance to assist the Board of Visitors in meeting specific instructional and school accreditation needs.

F. The Board of Visitors shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Establish such rules, policies, and regulations for the governance of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind.

2. Prescribe the criteria and procedures governing admissions to the school, and the review of student placement, to ensure the appropriateness of the placement and instructional program of each student admitted to the school, pursuant to § 22.1-348 and in accordance with federal and state special education laws and regulations.

3. Establish a policy governing the transportation of students at the school to permit frequent home visits by students, and to provide to each student transportation to and from the school and the place of residence of such student's parent or guardian whenever the school is officially closed.

4. Prescribe and approve the education programs of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind, in consultation with the Department, the Department for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

5. Appoint and supervise the superintendent, other officers, and the faculty of the school. The superintendent shall be appointed every two years and the other officers and faculty annually. However, the superintendent, with the approval of the chairman of the Board of Visitors, shall be authorized to fill vacancies in positions appointed by the Board of Visitors occurring between meetings of the Board of Visitors. The Board of Visitors may remove at any time the superintendent, other officers, faculty, and employees for cause, subject to the provisions of Chapter 29 (§ 2.2-2900 et seq.) of Title 2.2.

6. Establish the qualifications, duties, and compensation of the superintendent, other officers, faculty, and employees of the school.

7. Prepare and submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual report detailing the curricula and other educational programs and services of the school, including receipts and disbursements pertaining to the operation of the school for each fiscal year ending on June 30.

G. The Board of Visitors is hereby authorized to establish and maintain a campus security department and to employ campus security personnel therein.