

Chapter 208

(House Bill 440)

AN ACT concerning

St. Mary’s County Open Meetings Act – Public Agencies and Use of New Technology

FOR the purpose of altering the definition of “public agency” for purposes of the St. Mary’s County Open Meetings Act to include the St. Mary’s County Board of Library Trustees, the St. Mary’s County Metropolitan Commission, and the St. Mary’s County Housing Authority; encouraging certain public agencies to use new technology when available to aid in public accessibility and transparency; and generally relating to the St. Mary’s County Open Meetings Act.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Local Government
Section 9–501 and 9–509
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2013 Volume and 2019 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Local Government

9–501.

(a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

(b) “Official action” means a phase of the process in which a public agency in St. Mary’s County makes a decision or recommendation, including receipt of information and deliberation.

(c) (1) “Public agency” means:

(i) a governmental unit of St. Mary’s County, including an advisory or quasi-judicial agency, that is:

1. supported in any part by public money; or
2. authorized to spend public money; [and]

(ii) the St. Mary’s County Board of Education;

(III) THE ST. MARY’S COUNTY BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES;

(IV) THE ST. MARY’S COUNTY METROPOLITAN COMMISSION;

AND

(V) THE ST. MARY’S COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY.

(2) “Public agency” includes a subcommittee or other subordinate unit of a governmental unit listed in paragraph (1) of this subsection.

(3) “Public agency” does not include:

(i) a grand jury;

(ii) a petit jury;

(iii) a law enforcement agency; or

(iv) the judicial branch.

(d) “Public agency meeting” means the convening of a quorum of the constituent membership of a public agency to deliberate or act on a matter under the supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power of the public agency.

(e) “Quorum”, unless otherwise defined by applicable law, means a simple majority of the constituent membership of a public agency.

(f) “Staff meeting” means a meeting of three or more staff members of one or more public agencies.

9–509.

(a) A public agency that conducts a meeting that is open to the public shall allow recorded or live radio and television broadcasting and the use of recording devices.

(b) A public agency may adopt rules and regulations regarding the recording and broadcasting of public agency meetings.

(C) PUBLIC AGENCIES ARE ENCOURAGED TO USE NEW TECHNOLOGY WHEN AVAILABLE TO AID IN PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY AND TRANSPARENCY.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2020.

Enacted under Article II, § 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution, May 8, 2020.