

# Brown Act & Advisory Boards

Active Transportation Advisory  
Committee

January 28, 2026

# Advisory Committee

## What it IS NOT:

- Representing personal interests - Individual advocacy
- Individual grievance reporting
- Managing programs
- Providing direct operational oversight

## What it IS:

- Representing community interests - Overarching advocacy
- Reviewing trends, data, policies, procedures
- Formulating position statements
- Providing input on best practice processes

# Resource: Legal Handbook

Recommend Review of Legal Handbook  
for City of Fresno Boards, Commissions,  
Committees, and Similar Bodies

# Fair Political Practices

Purpose: to prohibit a public officer from participating in a decision that will impact his or her economic interests.

- Financial reporting (Political Reform Act)
- Ethics training (AB 1234)

Fair Political Practices Commission <http://www.fppc.ca.gov/>

# Brown Act Basics

Basic Rule: meetings of legislative bodies must be open and public

- Codified in Government Code §§ 54950 et seq.
- Purpose:
  - Facilitate Public Participation
  - Curb Misuse of Democratic Process by Secret Legislation by Public Bodies

# Brown Act

- ATAC is Subject to Brown Act
- Meetings Must be Conducted in Open Public Sessions
- Agendas Must be Posted in Advance

# Quorum

- Meeting requires a quorum to get started.
- If there is no quorum, no meeting can occur.

Meeting occurs:

1. When a majority of the members;
2. Are present at the same time and place;
3. To “hear, discuss, deliberate, or take action”;
4. “On any item within the subject matter jurisdiction” of the Committee.

# Agenda Posting Rules

## Agenda

- Posted at least 72 hours in advance
  - 24 hours in advance for special meetings
- Specify time and place
- General description of each item

# Agenda Content Rules

Agenda must provide:

- Public comment period to address each item on the agenda
- Unscheduled public comment period
  - any matter within the jurisdiction of the committee not on the agenda

# Meeting Discussions

- Board cannot discuss or take action on any item not appearing on the agenda

## Narrow Exceptions:

- briefly responding to comments made by a private person during public comment period;
- asking staff for clarification,
- directing staff to place item on future agenda
- Making brief announcement regarding member's own activities

# Information Shared in Meetings

- Equally available at same time to the public
  - Information
  - Documents
  - Reports given to committee
- No requirement for reports to be prepared prior to a meeting

# Public Rights

- Open to All
- Not required to register to attend
- Can be asked to give name and address to comment (not required)
- Right to videotape or record meetings if it doesn't create a persistent disruption

# Decorum

- Everything is public record
- You are a representative of the Councilmember or Mayor

# Meeting Types

- Regular Meetings
- Special Meetings
  - “As needed” basis for special purposes
- Emergency Meetings
  - Called on less than 24 hours’ notice
    - “regarding a work stoppage, crippling activity, or other activity that severely impairs public health, safety, or both, as determined by a majority of the body. An emergency meeting may also be held for a ‘dire emergency’ for a crippling disaster, mass destruction, terrorist act, or threatened terrorist activity.”

# Meeting Definition

*Any congregation of a majority of the members of the Board at the same time and place to hear, discuss, or deliberate upon any item that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board or the local agency to which it pertains. (Gov't. Code §§ 54952.2).*

- No need for Board to take action for a gathering to be a meeting

# Serial Meetings

- Prohibited
- Involve less than a quorum
- Results in collective concurrence without formal meeting

# Types of Serial Meetings

- Chain of direct communications
  - E.g.: e-mails being forwarded
- A series of communications between individual decision makers and a third party

# Gatherings – Not Meetings

- Individual Contact
  - Conversation between committee member
  - Not polling members
- Conference, Public Meetings, Social or Ceremonial Events
  - members can not discuss specific business among themselves

# Closed Sessions

Narrowly limited to discussions on:

- Pending litigation
- Employee performance
- Labor negotiations
- Real estate negotiations

Must report out on actions taken in closed session

# Social Media General Guidelines (Government Code §§54952.2)

DO'S	DON'TS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Engage with the public:</b> Answer questions, share factual info, and ask for feedback.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Interact with other members:</b> No commenting, liking, reacting, replying or reposting other member's post on matters within the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Post individually:</b> Share your own views without referencing other members.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Create majority discussions:</b> Avoid any chain of communication among a majority of members</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Provide general updates:</b> Announce events, resources, or public notices.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Coordinate decisions online:</b> No deliberation or planning outside official meetings.</li></ul>

# Questions & Comments