# City of Charlottesville Boards & Commissions

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LOCAL OFFICIALS' RESOURCE SERIES

2024-2025 Edition

# Virginia Freedom of Information Act

# Virginia Conflict of Interests Act

*and the*

# Virginia Public Records Act

*Guide for Local Government Leaders*


BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT

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## 2024-2025 Edition

# The Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Virginia Conflict of Interest Act and Virginia Public Records Act

## Guide for Local Government Leaders

BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH
SOUND GOVERNMENT

**July 2024**

# Introduction

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THIS UPDATED GUIDE is designed to help local government officials understand their responsibilities under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Virginia Conflict of Interests Act (COIA) and Virginia Public Records Act.

Each of the acts requires council members, supervisors, and certain other elected and appointed officials to read and familiarize themselves with the three sets of laws.

This 2024 Virginia Municipal League publication explains these laws in non-legal terms as much as possible. It is not written for lawyers, though we hope it will be useful for attorneys, too.

VML encourages all readers members to consult this guide when questions arise about these topics.

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# Virginia Freedom of Information Act
## Guide for Local Government Officials

### Introduction

The Virginia Freedom of Information Act was enacted by the General Assembly in 1968. In the years since, the law has undergone major revisions and has been modified annually to address new situations. Local public officials are required to read and familiarize themselves with the law. § 2.2-3702(ii). All local government officials including the executive director and members of each industrial development authority("IDA"), economic development authority ("EDA"), and members of any boards governing any authority established pursuant to the Park Authorities Act are required to take FOIA training within 2 months of assuming office and at least once every two years thereafter. Each local and regional public body must designate a FOIA Officer, whose contact information must be readily available. This guide provides useful assistance in meeting that obligation. Many provisions of the act address state agencies and other matters that do not concern local governments. Those provisions are not discussed. This guide will help local officials become familiar with their obligations under the law.

The Freedom of Information Act Advisory Council ("FOIA Council"), through its staff, provides local officials with timely information about the act that will assist in compliance. Contact information for the staff is found later in this report and can be found at http://foiacouncil.dls.virginia.gov.

This guide has two major sections – meetings of a public body and records of a public body. The term "public body" will be used to generally describe any locally elected public body, such as city and town councils, as well as any county board, ida, eda, and committees of all such bodies. Where a difference exists in the act's requirements for a specific type of local elected public body, the difference is noted.

### Purpose of the act

FOIA generally determines how local public bodies must conduct their meetings, from city council sessions to a citizen advisory committee recommending where to locate a new sidewalk. The act also regulates the public's access to local government records.

The guiding principle of FOIA is openness. The act aims to "[ensure] the people of the Commonwealth ready access to records in the custody of public officials and free entry to meetings of public bodies wherein the business of the people is being conducted." § 2.2-3700(B). The section further declares that "the affairs of government are not intended to be conducted in an atmosphere of secrecy since at all times the public is to be the beneficiary of any action taken at any level of government." Id.

Thus, FOIA attempts to ensure that Virginia's citizens have the ability to observe how their elected public officials are conducting public business.

### What's New

In 2022, the General Assembly made a few changes to electronic meetings. § 2.2-3708.3 was added to provide limited authority for some public bodies to hold all-virtual public meetings up to 2 times or 25% of the meetings held per calendar year whichever is greater. This year, the section was amended to allow all-virtual meetings up to 2 times or 50% of the meetings held in a calendar year.

Note, however, the authority to hold all-virtual public meetings does NOT include local governing bodies, zoning appeals boards, planning commissions, local school boards architectural review boards or any board with the authority to deny, revoke, or suspend a professional or occupational license unless there is a pandemic or other declared state of emergency.

Exempts certain public meetings from the definition of "meeting" under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act to clarify that three or more members of a public body may appear and participate

The definition of meeting was amended to clarify that three or more members of a public body may gather at any place or function as long as the purpose is not to transact or discuss public business, the gathering is not prearranged with that purpose and no discussion or transaction of public business actually takes place among members of the public body. . Moreover, members of a public body may appear and participate in a public meeting of a second public body without

violating FOIA, provided no public business of their own public body is transacted or discussed. "Public business" is now defined as any activity a public body has undertaken or proposes to undertake on behalf of the people it represents. The legislation states that it is declarative of existing law. For example, three or more members of council could attend the economic development authority meeting without violating FOIA if the public business of their own council is not transacted or discussed.

Legislation was also passed in response to *Berry vs. Bd. of Supervisors* (Va 2023)[1], which states that the provisions for conducting a meeting by electronic means due to a state of emergency as stated in FOIA are declarative of existing law since March 20, 2020 with respect to the Governor's declared state of emergency due to COVID-19. Any meetings held by a public body using electronic communication means from March 20, 2020 to July 1, 2021, and any lawful action taken is validated with respect to FOIA if the body provided the notice, access and comment commensurate with the requirements of FOIA regarding electronic and closed meetings.

Added to the FOIA is the definition of "caregiver." For purposes of determining whether a quorum is physically assembled, an individual member of a public body who is a person with a disability or a caregiver who uses remote participation counts towards the quorum as if the individual was physically present.

The last bill, which is also a study, prohibits a public body from charging a requester for any costs incurred during the first hour spent accessing, duplicating, supplying, or searching for records requested in conjunction with the requester's first request and makes various other changes related to charges for public records. The good news is that the language has to be reenacted next year after a study at the FOIA Council over the summer.

## I. Notices.

All local public bodies, including regional bodies shall designate and publicly identify one or more FOIA officers who will be responsible for FOIA requests in their locality. In addition, they must be trained once every 2 years by either the FOIA Council or their locality's attorney. § 2.2-3704.2. The name of the designated officer/officers must be provided to the FOIA Council by July 1st of each year.

Any city or town with a population of more than 250 must post rights and responsibilities on their website. §2.2-3704.1. A template of the rights and responsibilities is available on the FOIA Council website and can be easily adapted to any locality.

Cities and towns with a population of more than 250 shall also include a link on their official government public website to an online public comment form that will be on the FOIA Council's website.

Notice of date, time and location of a public meeting should be posted on the official government website if there is one, and also the usual places: in a public location where notices are usually posted and at the office of the clerk or if there is no clerk, the officer of the chief administrator. §2.2-3707.

If a meeting is continued; notice must be given to the public at the same time as the notice is sent to the members of the public body conducting the meeting. §2.2-3708.2.

Remember from last year's legislation that cities, towns and counties with a population over 250 and any school board shall post on their website a written policy (i) that explains how the public body assess charges for accessing or searching for requested records, and (ii) the current fees charged, if any, for accessing and searching for the requested records.

If a locality intends to charge for the production of a record, it shall notify the requestor in writing of the right to ask for a cost estimate (even if the FOIA request was not in writing).

## II. Meetings.

The basic fundamental principle of FOIA is that all meetings of public bodies are open to the public. Section §2.2-3700(B) makes this clear:

"Meetings shall be presumed open, unless an exemption is properly invoked. The provisions of this

[1]The Supreme Court in Berry v. Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County voided a revamped zoning ordinance vote that occurred at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, because the Court found that that the neither the Freedom of Information Act, the continuity of government ordinance, nor the 2020 budget allowed votes to be taken in electronic meetings on matters that were not "time-sensitive," or necessary for the "continuity of operations" (884 S.E.2d 515 (Va. 2023).

[2]IN 2023, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that the public must be able to physically attend meetings. However, the Court made clear that physical attendance is not "absolute," but rather is subject to a rule of reason ("a public body is not required to rent an arena if a topic is likely to generate larger than normal public interest; rather it must provide the 'normal' in-person access and take steps to allow members of the public who cannot be accommodated in the meeting room access by other means. Conversely, a public body may not select, design, or arrange a meeting room in a manner that artificially limits or removes the ability of the public to attend in person"). Suffolk City Sch. Bd. v. Wahlstrom, 886 S.E.2d 244 (Va. 2023).

chapter shall be liberally construed to promote an increased awareness by all persons of governmental activities and afford every opportunity to citizens to witness the operations of governments. Any exemption from public access to…meetings shall be narrowly construed and no…meeting closed to the public unless specifically made exempt pursuant to this chapter or other specific provision of law."[2]

Nevertheless, the Act contains numerous exceptions to the open meeting requirement. Some issues may be discussed in a meeting closed to the public. For instance, public bodies may hold a closed meeting if an open discussion will lead to the release of information that certain other state laws require to be kept secret. See § 2.2-3711(A)(26), (33), (34). Still, the fact that a meeting may be closed does not mean that it must be or even should be closed. Furthermore, any exceptions are to be narrowly construed.

Although not a part of FOIA, Virginia Code Section § 15.2-1416 now requires local governing bodies to hold a public comment period at a regular meeting at least quarterly.

## A. Public body.

The open meeting requirements apply whenever a public body holds or participates in a meeting. The definition of "public body" is very broad. See § 2.2-3701. City and town councils and county boards of supervisors obviously are included. All committees and subcommittees are included, regardless of whether any members of the local governing body serve on the committee. Citizen committees are included if the committee is charged by the public body appointing it with either carrying out some function for the public body or advising it. Elected local constitutional officers and private police departments are included for the purpose of access to public records but are not subject to the public meeting requirements. FOIA specifically states that having citizen members does not exempt abody from the act. Id. Accordingly, a citizens' committee formed by a city or town council to advise where a park or school should be located would be a public body subject to FOIA.

## B. What is a meeting?

City and town council meetings, county board meetings and committee meetings of a public body are certainly meetings regulated by the act. Like the definition of public body, the definition of meeting is broadly construed under § 2.2-3701, intending to capture any meeting where public business is transacted or discussed. Please note that the definition was amended this year and is explained above. A council work session is also a meeting, as is any other "informal assemblage" of as many as three members of a public body (or a quorum, if quorum is less than three members) where public business of the locality is discussed.

FOIA typically applies to public body gatherings irrespective of the meeting's location. It doesn't matter if a meeting is held in the council chambers or at a council retreat held out of the locality. The Virginia Supreme Court has specifically ruled that Virginia's FOIA applies even if the meeting is out of state.

Attendance at a VML Annual Conference or a National League of Cities meeting is sometimes a touchy subject. Because of the broad definition of public meeting, some councils and boards consider attendance at a state or national conference to be a meeting, and will comply with the notice requirements of the act (dicussed below) to be on the safe side, even though there is no plan to discuss the locality's public business. This action sometimes invokes a negative response from the media or citizens who complain that they cannot attend the out-of-town meeting. Conversely, if the council doesn't consider attendance at a conference to be a meeting, then the complaint becomes one that the council has left town for a private or secret meeting. The best practice is to announce the conference at a council meeting, but not describe it as a meeting of the locality, and to strictly avoid discussing town, city, or county business while attending the conference.

A gathering of council members does not create a meeting if public business is not discussed or carried out and the gathering was not called for the purpose of doing public business. § 2.2-3701. This section is aimed at allowing participation in community events, partisan political gatherings or social events. Without this section, a citizen could criticize a council for hold- ing a meeting if three members of council happen to show up at a community forum.

The definition of meeting includes a gathering of three or more members of a public body to discuss public business. §2.2-3701.[3] It is not a meeting 1) when the discussion or transaction of any public business is no part or purpose of the gathering or attendance, 2) the gathering was not prearranged for the purpose of public business, or 3) ) if the attendees are at a public forum, informational gathering, meeting of another public body, debate, or candidate appearance, that is held to inform the electorate and no public business is being transacted, even if the performance of members is a topic of discussion or debate at the gathering.

Finally, a staff meeting of employees of public body for business purposes does not constitute a meeting, under the § 2.2- 3701 definition.

## Number of public officials needed to constitute a meeting

Obviously, any meeting of a council qualifies as a public meeting. For the purposes of the act, such a council meeting is created if a majority of council, or three members, regardless of how many are needed for a majority, get together and discuss public business. § 2.2-3701. Therefore, if three members of a council meet on their own to discuss or act on government business, that creates a council meeting for purposes of FOIA, even if it is not considered a meeting under the locality's rules. If a public body or committee of a public body has only three members, then two members make a quorum, and members should not discuss the business of the body or committee outside of properly convened public meetings, inconvenient as that may be.

## Notice provisions

General notice requirements that are spelled out in the act must be followed in order to hold any meeting of a public body. The state code also contains numerous specific notice and advertising requirements for particular types of public business. These specific, subject matter requirements apply only if the public body is discussing the relevant type of public business.

Examples include notice of zoning actions (§ 15.2-2204) and adopting budgets (§ 15.2-2506). In all cases, the more general requirements in FOIA need to be fol- lowed in addition to any other requirements. For all regular meetings of a council, committee, board, or other agency, notice must be posted on the body's official public government website if any, public bulletin board or prominent public location and in the council clerk's office, or, if there is no clerk in the office of the chief administrator. The notice must state the date, time and location of the meeting and must be posted at least three days before the date the meeting is to take place. § 2.2-3707(C). For zoning actions, if the newspaper makes a mistake in your public notice after a locality has submitted a correct and timely notice; that notice is deemed to have met the requirements. See §15.2-2204.

For regular meetings, a simple way to comply with this requirement is to post a single notice listing the information for all meetings of the next year. This way, nobody will forget to give notice of a regularly scheduled meeting. For special, emergency meetings or continued meetings, the notice must be reasonable given the circumstances. The notice must be given to the public and anyone who has requested individual notice, at the same time the notice is given to the members being called to attend. § 2.2-3707(D).

Any person may file an annual request for notice of all meetings. In that case, the public body must notify the person making the request of all meetings. Sending the annual schedule of all regular meetings will assist in complying with this obligation. If the requester supplies an e-mail address, all notices may be sent via e-mail, unless the person objects. § 2.2-3707(E).

If a citizen submits an e-mail address and other personal contact information to a local governing body or any of its members for the purpose of being notified of meetings and other events, that e-mail address and other personal information need not be disclosed to others who request it, unless the citizen has indicated his approval for that disclosure pursuant to § 2.2-3705.1(10). Personal contact information includes addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers.

## Meeting minutes

Minutes of council meetings must be taken at all open meetings. § 2.2-3707(H). Minutes must be written and include the meeting's date, time, and location, along with attendance, a summary of discussed matters, and any votes taken. Minutes of council committee meetings are required to be taken only if a majority of the members of the council serve on the committee. Draft minutes and any audio or video recording made of a meeting are available to the public for inspection and copying. § 2.2-3707(H). This means that draft minutes must be disclosed when requested even if they have not yet been approved by the public body. Once finally approved, minutes of meetings of local governing bodies must be posted on their locality's website within seven working days.

The agenda packet and all materials furnished to the members of the council (except documents that are exempt from disclosure, such as advice of the town

3For a topic to constitute the 'business' of a public body, it must relate to a subject that falls within the purview of that public body. It must be something that is either before the public body or likely to come before the body in the foreseeable future." (the consideration of topics that are on the Board's agenda or soon will be is the business of the legislative body). Gloss v. Wheeler, No. 210779, 2023 Va. LEXIS 22 (May 18, 2023). In footnote 10, the Court also cited Roger C. Wiley's summary provided within a previous Freedom of Information Act Guide, namely that "'work sessions,' 'retreats' and other 'informal gatherings' of the public body at which public business is discussed are meetings covered by FOIA just as certainly as more formal assemblies, regardless of whether a formal agenda will be followed, or votes taken."

or city attorney or personnel records of an individual employee) must be made available for public inspection at the same time they are distributed to the members. § 2.2-3707(F). Any records that are exempt from disclosure do not need to be made available. The practical problem is for staff to remember to cull any exempt documents when making the public copy of the agenda. The better practice is to not include exempt documents as a part of the agenda package, but to send them to the members of the body separately.

## Recording meetings

Citizens have an absolute right to photograph and make video or audiotapes of public meetings. While the council may establish rules for where the equipment may be set up so meetings are not disrupted, the recording equipment may not be excluded altogether. § 2.2-3707(G). Council may not meet in a location where recordings are prohibited. If a courtroom, for example, has a standing order forbidding any form of recordation, public body meetings must be held elsewhere. § 2.2-3707(H).

## Electronic Meetings

Generally, in the absence of a declared state of emergency, a local governing body and many other public bodies may not hold all-virtual public meetings, including a conference call, pursuant to §§2.2.-3707, § 2.2-3708.2 and § 2.2-3708.3. In all of these situations public bodies are encouraged to provide public access both in person and through electronic communication means and provide avenues for public comment when customarily received.

There are a few exceptions:

### Individual members participate remotely (§2.2-3708.3)

Public bodies may hold meetings where one or more members participate by electronic means as long as a quorum of members is physically present at the meeting location, and the meetings comply with the heightened procedural requirements in §2.2-3708.3. These require that the public body has adopted an electronic meeting policy and the member has one of the following situations:

a. The member has a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents their physical attendance.

b. A medical condition of a member of the member's family requires the member to provide care that prevents their physical attendance.

c. The member's principal residence is more than 60 miles from the meeting location.

d. The member is unable to attend due to a personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the matter. However, the member may NOT use this provision more than twice or 25% of the meetings per calendar year, whichever is greater.

If remote participation is approved, it must be recorded in the minutes along with the reason for electronic participation. The remote location need not be open to the public.

### Electronic meetings outside a state of emergency (§2.2-3708.3)

Bodies that are NOT local governing bodies, local school boards, planning commissions, architectural review boards, zoning appeals boards and any board with the authority to deny, revoke, or suspect a professional or occupational licenses may hold all-virtual public meetings subject to procedural requirements and limitations to include the adoption of a policy and:

a. The meeting notice should indicate that the meeting will be electronic

b. Public access is provided via electronic communication means

c. Means of electronic communications must allow the public to hear all members of the public body participating and see them if possible

d. A phone number or other live contact information is provided to alert the public body if the audio or visual fails and the meeting must cease until transmission is restored

e. A copy of the proposed agenda, all agenda packets and any other public meeting materials must be available in an electronic format at the same time such materials are provided to the public body

f. The public is afforded the opportunity to comment through electronic means when public comment is customarily received (this includes written comments)

g. No more than 2 members of the public body are participating from the same remote location

h. If closed session is convened transmission of the meeting must resume prior to the certification of closed session

i. The public body may only convene all electronic meetings 2 times or 50% of the meetings per calendar year whichever is greater.

### Electronic meetings during a state of emergency (§2.2-3708.2)

If the Governor has declared a state of emergency pursuant to §44.1-146.17 or the locality in which the public body is located declared a state of emergency pursuant to §44.1-146.21 and if it is impracticable or unsafe to assemble a quorum and if the purpose of the meeting is to provide for the continuity of operations or the discharge of its lawful purposes, duties and responsibilities – the local government may convene an electronic meeting if:

a. Public notice is given using the best available method and contemporaneously with the public body

b. Public access must be provided through electronic means

c. Allow public comment if customarily received

In addition to these exceptions, council members have some flexibility in communicating through e-mail. A 2004 Virginia Supreme Court opinion, Beck v. Shelton, 267 Va. 482; 593 S.E.2d 195, ruled that council members e-mailing each other did not create a meeting for purposes of FOIA. In Beck, multiple e-mails were sent by an individual council member to all other members; some e-mails were in a reply to all members, and in one or two of the e-mails, the reply was made more than 24 hours after the e-mail to which it replied. The court found that no meeting had occurred, although the opinion noted that the outcome may have been different had the e-mails been part of instant messaging or a chat room discussion.

The Virginia Supreme Court reinforced its Beck reasoning in Hill v. Fairfax County School Board, No.111805 ( June 7, 2012). Hill involved e-mails between members of a school board that were exchanged over an even shorter interval than in Beck. Back-and-forth communications only occurred between two board members (not the three required for a meeting under FOIA). Any e-mail that was received by three or more members was found to be of an informational or unilateral nature and did not create any discussion among members. Following Beck, the court reiterated that e-mails between council members must be sufficiently simultaneous to create a meeting for the purposes of FOIA. Hill affirmed the lower court's finding that the school board members' communications did not create a meeting because the e-mails did not show the simultaneity or group discussion required under FOIA. Thus, responsive e-mails between at least three council members must occur within quick succession to constitute a meeting (though the precise responsive speed that would be necessary is unclear).

Text messages have been the subject of many discussions by the FOIA Council in the last year or so. If you conduct public business via text message, you are obligated to retain those records under the Public Records Act and all of the FOIA rules apply.

### Voting

All votes must be made publicly. Secret ballots are not allowed, unless specifically permitted by some other provision of law. § 2.2-3710(A). This section, however, specifically authorizes each member of council to contact other members of a council or other body "for the purpose of ascertaining a member's position" on public business without making the position public. § 2.2-3710(B). Further, nonbinding votes or "straw polls" may be taken in closed session, but they have no legal effect until repeated in open session.

## C. Closed meetings.

A closed meeting is a meeting of a council or other public body from which the public is excluded. It may be held only for specific reasons, which are delineated in the act. Closed meetings must be convened during an open meeting of the public body (the specific procedures are described below). After the closed portion of a meeting, the council must reconvene in open session to certify that the closed meeting portion was carried out legally. There are a few exceptions to the requirement that a closed meeting be held as a part of an open meeting. They are discussed below.

### Purposes for closed meetings

Section §2.2-3711 sets out many permissible reasons for holding a closed meeting, some of which don't apply to local governments. A city or town council or board of supervisors will generally need to hold a closed meeting for one of eight possibilities:

- Personnel matters - subsection 1;
- Real property acquisition or disposition- subsection 3;
- Privacy of individuals unrelated to public business - subsection 4;
- Prospective location of a new business or expansion of an existing one subsection 5;
- Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation- subsection 7;
- Consultation with legal counsel regarding specific legal matters- subsubsection 8;
- Terrorism- subsection 19; or

• Award of a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds subsection 29.

***1. Personnel matters***. §2.2-3711(A)(1) authorizes a closed meeting for: "[d]iscussion, consideration or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining or resignation of specific public officers, appointees or employees of any public body."

The most significant requirement in this subsection is that the discussion be about one or more specific people. This means that the council may not discuss general personnel issues in a closed meeting. For example, the council would not be authorized to meet behind closed doors to discuss a pay plan or set salaries for all employees. The council could, however, meet to discuss the pay increase to be given an employee or appointee, based on the council's discussion in the meeting of the employee's performance.

Note that the section applies to three classes of public officials: public officers, public appointees and employees of the public body. Therefore, the council could discuss the performance of a specific planning commis- sion member in closed meeting since that person is an appointee of the council.

Two Virginia attorney general opinions have clouded the use of the section for a closed meeting discussion of most employees and some other public officials. In an opinion issued Dec. 16, 1998, the attorney general opined that a council may not hold a closed meeting to discuss employees who are not directly employed by the council. The opinion states that only the manager, clerk, and city attorney could be discussed in a closed meeting, because the city charter stated that only those three employees are under the "full supervisory authority" of the council. The attorney general confirmed the opinion in a second opinion dated May 18, 2000, which was written in response to a request for reconsideration. 2000 WL 8752.

Many local government attorneys disagree with this opinion. The specific language of the subsection allowing a closed meeting for personnel matters states that the individual must be an employee of the public body. The opinion limits the term "employee of the public body" in a manner that is inconsistent with the common understanding of the authority of a city or town council over all employees, not just those who report directly to the council. If a council directs the manager to fire an employee for a problem it discussed in a closed meeting, the manager would be expected to fire the individual. Direct supervisory control by council may not exist, but the council retains the ultimate responsibility for the operation of the city or town; hence, the council should logically retain the ability to confidentially discuss the employee. The FOIA Council does advise that, even accepting the attorney's general opinion, the council could convene in closed session to discuss the manager's handling of the personnel matter, since the manager is a direct employee of the council.

The other opinion that has cast a cloud on the use of the exemption was issued April 5, 1999. It states that a school board cannot meet in closed session to discuss choosing a chairman and vice chairman. The rationale was that the chairman and vice chairman are not appointed or employed by the public body. The specific words of the section, however, make personnel matters apply to "specific public officers, appointees or employees" of the public body. Certainly, in the case in the opinion, the chairman is a public officer and appointee of the school board, since the board makes the appointment or election in the case in the opinion, and the chair is the leader of the board.

Opinions of the attorney general do not have the effect of a court decision. They are only opinions that may be considered for guidance. Courts will give some weight to such opinions but are not bound by them. Localities are cautioned in this area. It is always possible that a judge will simply follow an opinion without evaluating its merits. In that case, a locality could find itself losing a case in court over either of these two issues.

***2. Real property.*** A closed session for discussion of real property issues is allowed for the acquisition of land for a public purpose or disposition of publicly held land, but only if discussing the matter in open session would harm the council's bargaining position. § 2.2-3711(A)(3).

The council does not need to state why an open discussion would harm its position in the motion to hold a closed meeting. Still, a council should be prepared to defend the closed meeting if challenged.

***3. Privacy of individuals unrelated to public business.*** Local governments do not use this section very often because a council meeting is generally limited to discussing public business. However, if as a part of public business a matter arises that affects the privacy of an individual unrelated to public business, the meeting may be carried out in private.

For example, if the locality is relocating a street, and a landowner who could be displaced has a medical condition that would make condemning his home a life-threatening situation, that would be a privacy issue for the citizen not related to public business. It would

be appropriate for the council to avoid discussion in the public view, in order to protect the individual's privacy.

Usually closed sessions are limited to a specific permissible topic related to public business. Once in a while, however, there may be a need for a member of a public body to make colleagues aware of a personal situation not related to public business. Typically, this involves sharing information about the medical condition or treatment of the member or someone in the member's family. § 2.2-3711(A)(4).

***4. Prospective business and business retention.*** Recruitment of new businesses can be highly competitive, and prosects often don't want to reveal their interest in a locality until they make a firm decision to locate there. § 2.2-3711(A)(5) allows a closed discussion about a prospective business is allowed as long as there has been no previous "announcement" of the interest of the business in the community. What constitutes an announcement is an unresolved question. One circuit court has ruled that a news report without any statement by the government qualifies as an announcement. The FOIA Council, however, takes the position that an announcement is something more than a newspaper report speculating about business prospect.

If a public official or official of the business makes a public statement about the business coming to the locality, however that is likely to be considered an announcement and a closed session under this subsection is no longer allowed.

§ 2.2-3711(A)(5) also permits a closed meeting to discuss the expansion of an existing business. In that situation there must have been no public announcement of the company's interest in expanding.

A locality may also go into closed session to discuss the retention of an existing business. FOIA allows this when the retention discussion relies on proprietary information from the business, or memoranda and/or working papers from the public body that, if publicized, would be adverse to the financial interests of the locality. §§ 2.2-3711(40) & 2.2-3705.6(3).

***5. Consultation with legal counsel.*** This important provision is limited to two types of legal matters:

1. Actual litigation; and

2. Probable litigation: § 2.2-3711(A)(7);

For actual or probable litigation, a closed meeting is allowed only if discussion in the open could "adversely affect the negotiating or litigatingposture" of the public body. § 2.2-3711(A)(7). For example, there is no need to hold a closed meeting to simply explain to city council that the locality has been sued. The suit is a public record in the circuit court clerk's office, so a briefing that the suit has been filed should be done in open meeting. In contrast, a briefing by the city attorney on the strategy for defending the suit would be appropriate for a closed meeting because open discussion would obviously hinder the defense.

In contrast to actual litigation, probable litigation need not have been filed, but must have been "specifically threatened," or the locality or its attorney must have a "reasonable basis" to believe a suit will be filed.

***6. Specific legal matters requiring the advice of counsel.*** This category is limited to "consultation with counsel ... regarding specific legal matters" requiring legal advice. § 2.2-3711(A)(8). This category, like the two litigation categories, is limited to consulting the attorney (or other staff members or consultants) about a legal issue facing the locality that is an appropriate matter for a closed meeting.

If non-attorney staff members participate, the attorney should still be present and participating in the consultation Simply having an attorney present does not allow a general discussion among the members about other issues.

This rule was demonstrated in the March 2000 Richmond Circuit Court opinion Colonial Downs, L.P v. Virginia Racing Commission, (2000 WL 305986). In that case, the racing commission went into a closed meeting for consultation with counsel, but spent the time holding a general discussion of Colonial Downs' application for licensing. The court held that the meeting was a violation of the act.

***7. Terrorism.*** After the September 11 terrorist attacks, it became clear that some provisions of the act made it easy for a terrorist to gain security information through a FOIA request. One step in response was to allow a meeting in closed session to discuss planning to protect from terrorist activity or specific cybersecurity threats or vulnerabilities under § 2.2-3711(A)(19). The public body may meet to be briefed by staff, attorneys or law-enforcement or emergency personnel to respond to terrorist or "a related threat to public safety". This exemption applies if "discussion in an open meeting would jeopardize the safety of any person or the security of any facility, building, structure, information technology system or software program; or discussion of reports or plans related to the security of any governmental facility, building or structure, or the safety of persons using such facility, building or structure."

***8. Award of a Public Contract.*** Localities need to be able to conduct interviews of bidders or offerors as well as discuss negotiated terms of contracts before

approving them. If a contract involves the expenditure of public funds and discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the locality, a closed session is appropriate under §2.2-3711(A)(29).

## Procedures for closed meetings

To go from an open meeting to a closed meeting, there must be a re- corded vote in open meeting. The motion must include the following elements:

1. The subject must be identified (example: new park in east end of city);
2. A statement of the purpose of the meeting

(acquiring land for park); and,

3. A reference to the code section authorizing the meeting. § 2.2-3712(A).

The degree of specificity required in stating he subject of a meeting varies with the nature of the issue.

For example, for discussion about a pending lawsuit, the motion should name the suit. After all, the pleadings are public and the suit may well have been the subject of a newspaper article. On the other hand, a discussion of a sensitive person- nel matter should not contain as much specificity in the motion. Identifying the employee who is the subject of the closed meeting would partially negate the reason for having the closed meeting – protection of the employee's privacy The council will need to exercise discretion in the wording of closed meeting motions.

Nonetheless, in no case will a general statement be sufficient to satisfy the first and second requirements for the closed meeting motion. "Personnel matters, pursuant to FOIA" is NOT adequate for a motion for a closed meeting. The Virginia Supreme Court opinion in White Dog Publishing, Inc. v. Culpeper County Board of Supervisors, made this clear and was reinforced this in the case of Cole v. Smyth County Board of Supervisors.

During a closed meeting, only the topics identified in the motion may be discussed. § 2.2-3712(C). To discuss more than one topic, the council should either include both topics in one motion, which is the preferred method, or come out of closed meeting, certify the first topic and re-enter after making a new motion on the second topic. The council may record minutes, but that is not required and generally not a good idea. § 2.2-3712(I).

Va. Code § 2.2-3712(H) states that any official vote or action must he held in open session. Many local governments, therefore, take no more than a straw poll during a closed meeting, or take no votes at all, no matter how informal.

Any member who disagrees and intends to vote against the certification motion must state how the closed meeting did not satisfy the requirements of the Act, before the vote is taken. § 2.2-3712(D). A record of the vote must be kept in the public body's minutes.

***Interviewing chief administrative officer candidates.*** Most closed meetings must be held as a part of, or soon after an open meeting, so the public knows the time and place of the closed meeting. The Act contains an important exception for local governments in § 2.2-3712(B). If a public body plans to hold interviews with applicants for its chief administrative officer position, it may make a single announcement in open meeting that it will hold interviews. It need not identify the location of the interviews or the names of the interviewees. The interviews must be held within 15 days of the motion.

***Annexation agreements.*** Independent of FOIA, Va. Code § 15.2-2907(D) allows a council or board to hold meetings on matters concerning annexation or a voluntary settlement agreement with no FOIA implications. This means notice need not be given, the public need not be invited, and minutes need not be taken. No other FOIA requirements need to be followed. The section does not prohibit a public body from following the FOIA requirements, but they are not mandatory.

# III. Records.

A major purpose of FOIA is to set out the rules for public record disclosure. The general rule in FOIA concerning records is that they are open to public inspection and copying. However, many categories of records are exempt from public access. Most of these categories do not apply to local governments. The fact that a record may be exempt from disclosure does not require it to be withheld. Each exemption section states in the opening sentence that the records "may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law." § 2.2-3705.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

Some records, however, are prohibited by other laws from being disclosed at all. The custodian has no discretion to permit their disclosure. Common examples include certain tax records hat Va. Code § 58.1-3 requires to be kept confidential, most social services records , and health records protected by the federal HIPPA law.

FOIA applies broadly to records of the public body, regardless of form. It does not matter whether the records are on paper, or in an electronic form, or in some other medium, such as e-mails, databases, GPS maps, text and voice mail messages, audio and video recordings, or even a note scribbled on a paper napkin can be public records if they are about, and created while conducting, the business of a public body. A Facebook page or Twitter post can be a public record if it meets these criteria.

## A. Responding to disclosure requests

***Custodian of records.*** The records provisions of the Act use the term "custodian of the records" as the person who has the responsibility to respond. Some sections mention the obligation of the public body, but the responsibility is clearly with the custodian. If suit is brought over a violation, however, the public body can expect to be named as a defendant.

A records request should not be denied just because it was directed to the wrong official if the recipient knows or should know that the records are available from another official. In this case, the recipient of the request should respond to the request with the contact information for the other public body or its FOIA officer or just work with the other official to provide the records. § 2.2-3704(B)(3).

If the locality stores archived records off-site, and the records are in control of a third party, it is still the public body's responsibility to retrieve those records if they are requested. § 2.2-3704( J). The Library of Virginia is the custodian of local records once they have been properly archived there. *Id.*

***Procedures for handling requests.*** Any citizen or member of the media may request an opportunity to inspect and/or copy public records. The request does not have to refer to the Act, but only needs to identify the requested records with reasonable specificity. § 2.2-3704(B). There is no authority to require the request to be in writing, nor may the custodian of the records refuse to reply to a request if the requester refuses to put a request in writing. Some public bodies nevertheless ask for the request to be reduced to writing voluntarily. This is a useful policy because it helps the custodian better understand what is being requested. That helps the requester, since the custodian can shorten the time researching records, thereby reducing the potential cost to the individual. If the individual making the request declines to reduce the request it to writing, a helpful option is to confer with the individual and write down the request, allowing the person to see the note and hopefully sign it, so no confusion will exist. The requester does not have to say why the records are being requested, and the public body or its FOIA officer should not askwhat they will be used for.

The custodian or FOIA officer may, however, require the persons asking to see or copy records to give their name and legal address. § 2.2-3704(A). This 2002 amendment was part of an anti-terrorism bill but is not limited to record requests relating to terrorism.

The act is not clear on what happens if the requester refuses. VML suggests that if the requester does refuse, the language that the custodian "may require" the information necessarily implies that the custodian may refuse to allow access to the records.

The act does not give any rights to people who are not residents of Virginia, or to media representatives if the media entity does not publish or broadcast into the state. § 2.2-3704(A). The right to refuse out-of state requests for records has been affirmed by the courts. As a practical matter, however, it is often easy for someone from another state to find a Virginia citizen who will request the records.

## B. Types of responses

There are five possible and pemissible responses to a request:

1. Provide the records within five working days;
2. If the response is made within five working days, obtain seven additional days to respond. and in the case of a request for criminal investigative files pursuant to § 2.2-3706.1, 60 work days in which to provide one of the responses below;
3. Claim one or more specific exemptions from all or a portion of the request;
4. Say that the records do not exist; or
5. Say that the records are kept by another public body and give the contact information for that body or its FOIA officer.

The initial response must be made within five business days of the receipt of the request, pursuant to § 2.2-3704, regardless of which response is used. If the custodi- an fails to respond within the times required, § 2.2-3704 considers that to be a denial of the request and makes it a violation of the act. In counting the five days, if you receive the request on a Monday, day one is Tuesday and then the five days would expire the next Monday.

**NOTE:** the extent to which FOIA applies to courts is unclear, but a clerk of court must make non-confidential court records available to the public upon request no later than 30 days after the request is made. The

clerk may charge a fee for the actual cost of producing the records. §16.1-69.54:1 and §17.1-208.

Notably, the public body is not required to create records if they do not exist or to compile information into a new record. § 2.2-3704(D). However, simple extraction of information from an electronic database into a separate document or file is not considered to be the creation of a new record.Subsection D encourages public bodies to abstract or summarize information in a manner agreed to with the requester.

***1. Provide the records.*** The first response, providing the records, is straightforward. The custodian simply makes them available. If the individual asks to receive copies, the copies need to be made within the five days, if possible, or at such later time the custodian and requester agree.

***2. Obtain seven additional days to respond.*** Similarly, if it is "not practically possible to provide the ... records or to determine whether they are available," § 2.2-3704(B)(4), within the five days, the custodian may send a written response to the person making the request, explaining the conditions that make the response impractical. After complying with this requirement, the custodian will have an additional seven business days to respond. The added seven days does not begin until the end of the fifth day of the initial period. For example, if the custodian sends a letter on the second day after receipt of the request, he or she will still have a total of 12 workdays to respond. In the case of a request for criminal investigative files pursuant to § 2.2-3706.1, the custodian may send a written response to the person making the request and invoke an additional 60 workdays to respond to the request (2.2-3704(4)).

Additionally, a public body may petition a court for even more time to respond to a request. However, VML recommends that you first try to negotiate with therequester. The additional time will likely be granted if the public body can demonstrate that the volume of records requested is so large that it would disrupt its operations to respond in the prescribed time and that it is unable to reach an agreement for a time to respond with the requester. § 2.2-3704(C).

***3. Claim a partial or full exemption to the request.*** If one or more of the many exemptions apply, the custodian may, within the five-workday limit, send the requester a written explanation of why all or some of the records are exempt. The explanation must identify the subject matter of the records (example: performance evaluations) and must cite the section of FOIA that authorizes the exemption. § 2.2-3704(B)(2).

If only a portion of the requested records is exempt, the non-exempt parts must be made available within the five days, unless additional time is properly invoked.

In 1999, the Virginia Supreme Court decided *Lawrence v. Jenkins, 258 Va. 598*, a case in which a county zoning administrator failed to supply the code section he was relying on to exempt certain information in response to a FOIA request. The act required the code sections to be identified in the written response to the requester. Long after the time to respond had passed, the administrator sent the requester a letter identifying the code section. The court ruled that the violation still did not permit the individual to see the records and ruled that the records were exempt. Even though the zoning administrator did fail to meet FOIA requirements, the court determined the violation did not harm the requester because he would not have been allowed to see the records if the act had been complied with. VML does not recommend relying on this case. It is simple enough to include in your response the code sections containing the exemptions on which you are relying to deny the requests.

## Charges for responding to a request

The public body may charge the requester for searching and copying records. The costs must be reasonable, not to exceed the actual cost "incurred in accessing, duplicating, supplying, or searching for the requested records." § 2.2-3704(F). A public body may not charge for overhead items, such as utilities, debt payments and the like. The hourly salary rate of any local employee who spends time researching and assembling records for the request may be charged, as may actual copying costs. The time limit to respond to a FOIA request is tolled during the time that elapses between notice of the cost estimate and the response. If the public body receives no response from the requester within 30 days of sending the estimate the request is deemed withdrawn.

In responding to a request for duplication of part of a geographic information system database by making copies of GIS maps, the locality may base its charge on a per acre cost if the area requested exceeds 50 acres. § 2.2-3704(F).

If the custodian determines that the cost of responding will be more than $200, the requester may be asked to agree to pay a deposit in the amount of the projected costs before any information is disclosed. The time limits are tolled until payment of the deposit.

### Format of records

Confusingly, the custodian must provide computer records in any "tangible medium identified by the requester," except that it need not produce the material found in an electronic database in "a format not regularly used by the public body." § 2.2-3704(G). The subsection is further muddied by a statement that provides – not withstanding this limitation – that the public body should try to come to an agreement with the requester regarding the format of the documents to be supplied. Thus, a public body does not have to disclose electronic records in a format it does not regularly use but it must comply with any request for records maintained in a medium the public body uses in the regular course of business.

In a 1999 opinion, the attorney general opined that a local commissioner of the revenue is not required to make a copy of the personal property book for a citizen. The personal property book is a large, computer-generated bound book that every commissioner maintains. The attorney general reasoned that the act allows the commissioner to put the burden of copying on the citizen if the office has no means to copy the document. In most localities today, the information in the personal property book could be reproduced in electronic form without the book binding. The same reasoning would apply, however, to a local government agency that is incapable of providing requested information stored on electronic databases in a particular format requested by a citizen. § 2.2-3704(G).

### E-mails and Text Messages

E-mails have generated much controversy since they began being used in government business operation. E-mails that deal with public business are public records. E-mails kept on the home computer of a council member or local government employee that relate to the transaction of public business are public and subject to inspection and copying by a citizen who makes a request to see the records.

Text messages have become the subject of many FOIA requests as well. These must be produced if requested and are subject to the records retention rules as well. If you are transacting public business, the ownership of the device used to send a text message about that public business is irrelevant.

### Draft documents

Draft documents are disclosable records. When FOIA was first adopted, there was a specific exemption of drafts from mandatory disclosure, but the General Assembly later repealed that exemption. The only specific mention of draft records inFOIA now is to the minutes of a public body. Section §2.2-3707 specifically states that draft minutes are available for inspection. Some local governments once had policies that denied the public viewing of draft minutes. Those policies are invalid.

## C. Exemptions list.

The list of hundreds of types of public records that may be held exempt from disclosure by the custodian is set out in seven separate, lengthy sections. The Act uses the terms "exemption" and "exclusion" more or less interchangeably. Fortunately, the relevant Code sections are arranged by subject area to make it easier to find the exemptions that may apply. The current sections are:

- Exclusions of general application to public bodies: § 2.2-3705.1.
- Exclusions; records relating to public safety: § 2.2-3705.2
- Exclusions; records relating to administrative investigations: § 2.2-3705.3.
- Exclusions; educational records and certain records of educational institutions: § 2.2-3705.4.
- Exclusions; health and social services records: § 2.2-3705.5.
- Exclusions; proprietary records and trade secrets: § 2.2-3705.6.
- Exclusions; records of specific public bodies and certain other limited exemptions: § 2.2-3705.7.

Most local governments will only use approximately 20 of the exemptions, and only 10 will apply

[4]In Hawkins v. Town of South Hill, the Supreme Court adopted a definition of "personnel information" to encompass "data, facts, or statements within a public record relating to a specific government employee, which are in the possession of the entity solely because of the individual's employment relationship with the entity, and are private, but for the individual's employment with the entity." Hawkins v. Town of S. Hill, 878 S.E.2d 408 (Va. 2022). Using an objective test, the Court held that "data, facts, and statements are private if their disclosure would constitute an 'unwarranted invasion of personal privacy' to a reasonable person under the circumstances (finding that a letter from several town employees requesting a meeting with town administrators regarding their "concerns" about the "workplace environment" did not contain any exempt personnel information or "anything else that could be deemed to be personal in nature"). However, the Court order redacted portions of an email containing specific complaints about the performance of the Town Manager and remanded the case for further consideration.

frequently. The exemptions that most often apply to local government are:

- "State income, business, and estate tax returns, personal property tax returns, scholastic and confidential records held pursuant to § 58.1-3."
- § 2.2-3705.7(1) "Personnel records containing information con- cerning identifiable individuals, except that access shall not be denied to the person who is the subject thereof." § 2.2-3705.1.(1). Any adult subject may waive confidentiality, in which case the government may release information about that person.[4]
- "Working papers and correspondence of the ... mayor or chief executive officer of any political subdivision of the Commonwealth .... However, no record which is otherwise open to inspection under this chapter shall be deemed exempt by virtue of the fact that it has been attached to or incorporated within any working paper or correspondence. Working papers will not be information that is publicly available that has been aggregated, combined, or changed in format without substantive analysis or revision. § 2.2-3705.7(2). n Publicly available information that has been aggregated, combined, or changed in format without substantive analysis or revision will not be considered a "working paper."

As used in this subdivision: "Working papers" means those records prepared by or for a named public official for his personal or deliberative use. Generally, once the records have been shared by the chief administrative officer (county administrator or city or town manager), the records lose the working papers status, unless the records are collected from the council members or other people who have accessed them at the end of a closed meeting where the records were distributed.

- Consultants' reports as working papers: Working papers, by the above definition, applies to records prepared by or for a manager or mayor for his personal or deliberative use. Once a consultant's report is distributed or disclosed to council or that is the subject of the consultant's report, the report loses its exempt status as a working paper. § 2.2-3705.8. Therefore, until either of those two conditions occurs, the report may be withheld as a working paper. Once either event occurs, the working paper is no longer expempt from mandatory disclosure. If the report is exempt for other reasons, it remains exempt.
- "Written advice of legal counsel to state, regional or local public bodies or public officials, and any other records protected by the attorney client privilege." § 2.2-3705.1(2).
- "Legal memoranda and other work product compiled specifically for use in litigation or for use in an active administrative investigation concerning a matter which is properly the subject of a closed meeting under § 2.2-3711." § 2.2-3705.1(3).

Subsections 2 and 3 of § 2.2-3705.1 are the classic attorney client and attorney's work product rules.

- "Library records which can be used to identify (i) both (a) any library patron who has borrowed or accessed material online from a library, (b) the material such patron borrowed or accessed (ii) any library patron under 18 years of age. For purposes of this clause (ii), access shall not be denied to the parent, including a noncusto- dial parent, or guardian of such library patron." § 2.2-3705.7(3).
- "Any test or examination used, administered or prepared by any public body for purposes of evaluation of (i) any student or any student's performance, (ii) any employee or employment seeker's qualifications or aptitude for employment, retention, or promotion, or (iii) qualifications for any license or certificate issued by a public body." § 2.2-3705.1(4). This subsection includes exemptions for test keys and any other information that would defeat the usefulness of the test.
- "Records recorded in or compiled exclusively for use in closed meetings lawfully held pursuant to § 2.2-3711. However, no record which is otherwise open to inspection under this chapter shall be deemed exempt by virtue of the fact that it has been reviewed or discussed in a closed meeting." § 2.2-3705.1(5).
- "Computer software developed by or for a ... political subdivision of the Commonwealth." § 2.2-3705.1(7).
- "Customer account information of a public utility affiliated with a political subdivision of the Commonwealth, including the customer's name and service address, but excluding the amount of utility service provided and the amount of money charged or paid for such utility service." § 2.2-3705.7(7). Note that under this subsection, anyone has access to the volume of service used at a particular address and the price paid, even though the current customer's name and payment record are exempt from disclosure.
- "Appraisals and cost estimates of real property subject to a proposed purchase, sale or lease, prior

to the completion of such purchase, sale or lease." § 2.2-3705.1(8).

This section has been modified by Va. Code § 25.1-417. Local governments are now in the list of agencies that must follow the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act. One of the obligations, in paragraph (2) requires that: "real property shall be appraised before the initiation of negotiations, and the owner or his designated representative shall be given an opportunity to accompany the appraiser during his inspection of the property." Therefore, in any purchase of land to which the URAA applies, the landowner must be allowed to see a copy of the appraisal, and the appraisal must be done before beginning negotiations for the land.

- "Confidential information designated as trade secrets or proprietary information by any person in connection with a procurement transaction or by any person who has submitted to a public body an application for prequalification to bid on public construction projects in accordance with subsection B of § 2.2-4317." § 2.2-3705.6(10). Language in the Virginia Public Procurement Act supports this exemption. However, a bidder, offeror, or contractor may not designate as trade secrets or proprietary information (a) an entire bid, proposal, or prequalification application; (b) any portion of a bid, proposal, or prequalification application that does not contain trade secrets or proprietary information; or (c) line item prices or total bid, proposal, or prequalifica- tion application prices. 2.2-4342(F).
- "Information contained in (i) engineering, architectural, or construction drawings; (ii) operational, procedural, tactical planning, or training manuals; (iii) staff meeting minutes; or (iv) other records that reveal any of the following, the disclosure of which would jeopardize the safety or security of any person; governmental facility, building, or structure; or public or private commercial office, multifamily residential, or retail building or its occupants. § 2.2-3705.2(14).

  This section also includes critical infrastructure and information related to such, as well as vulnerability assessments and information technology.

  **NOTE:** If a public body receives a request for these types of records, the public body is responsible for notifying the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security or their designee.
- Information contained in engineering and construction drawings and plans for any single family residential dwelling submitted for the purpose of complying with the Uniform Statewide Building Code (§ 36-97 et seq.) or the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (§ 27-94 et seq.) shall be confidential and shall not be subject to disclosure under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.), except to the applicant or the owner of the property upon the applicant's or owner's request. §36-105.3.
- Personal information furnished to a public body for the purpose of receiving electronic mail from the public body, provided that the electronic mail recipient has requested that the public body not disclose such information. However, access shall not be denied to the person who is the subject of the record. § 2.2-3705.1(10). Personal contact information includes home or business address, email address or telephone number.
- The name, address and phone number of a person complaining about another person on a Zoning, Building Code or Fire prevention Code complaint are exempt from disclosure. This provision is not limited to criminal complaints: it applies in any investigation of the complaints. § 2.2-3705.3(8).
- §2.2-3705.5(7) exempts information or records of local or regional adult fatality review teams from disclosure. HB 1558. Any locality participating in such review teams may withhold records and information to the extent the information is made confidential by § 32.1-283.6.

## D. Criminal incident information.

Most of the rules for criminal incident information are set out in §2.2-3706 and §2.2-3706.1. Both sections discuss the disclosure of law enforcement and criminal records.

### Records under §2.2-3706

There are certain records required to be released under this code section, including:

a. Adult arrestee photographs taken during initial intake following the arrest and as part of a routine booking procedure, except when releasing a photo would jeopardize a felony case, and only until the release will no longer jeopardize the case

b. Information about the identity of any individual, other than a juvenile who is arrested and charged along with the status

c. Records of completed unattended death investigations [shall be released] to the parent or spouse of the decedent, or if there is no living person or spouse, to the most immediate family member who is not a person of interest or suspect

These records may be disclosed at the discretion of the custodian unless prohibited by another code section:

a. Criminal investigative files related to ongoing cases.
b. Reports submitted in confidence to law enforcement agencies, investigators as defined, and campus police departments as defined in the code section
c. Records of local law-enforcement agencies relating to neighborhood watch programs
d. All records of persons imprisoned in penal institutions in the Commonwealth related to the imprisonment
e. All records of adult persons under investigation or supervision by state or local pretrial services or probation services both state or local
f. Records of law-enforcement agencies to the extent they disclose telephone numbers, etc. provided to its personnel for use in the performance of official duties
g. Portions of records related to undercover operations or protective detail that would reveal the staffing, logistics, or tactical plans of such operations
h. Records of background investigations of applicants for law-enforcement agency employment, administrative investigations of wrongdoing by law enforcement and other administrative investigations made confidential by law
i. The identity of any victim, witness, or undercover officer, or investigative techniques or procedures; however, the identity of any victim or witness shall be withheld if disclosure is prohibited or restricted under § 19.2-11.2; and
j. Records of Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry

The identity of any individual providing information about a crime or criminal activity under a promise of anonymity shall not be disclosed. §2.2-3706(C).

If someone has been promised anonymity it shall not be disclosed. Noncriminal records may be withheld or portions thereof when it would jeopardize the safety or privacy of any person.

### §2.2-3706.1 and §8.01-622.2

This code section was amended and §8.01-622.2 was added to the Code in 2022. They provide that criminal investigative file relating to a criminal investigation or proceeding that is not ongoing are excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of FOIA though they may be disclosed at the custodian's discretion to certain individuals. With the except of disclosure to an attorney representing a petitioner or inspection by an attorney or person proceeding pro se in a petition for a writ of habeas corpus or writ of actual innocence of any other federal or state post-conviction processing, no criminal investigative file or portion thereof shall be disclosed to any requestor except the victim, the victim's immediate family if the victim is deceased and the immediate family member to whom the records are to be disclosed as long as such is not a person of interest or a suspect in the investigation; or the victim's parent or guardian, also if not a suspect unless the public body has made reasonable efforts to notify any such individual of the request. The bill provides a timeline of 14 days and adds avenues for appropriate court protection of the records.

The records may not be released if they interfere with an investigation, deprive a person of the right to fair trial, constitute a violation of personal privacy, disclose a confidential informant, or endanger the life or safety of an individual.

§8.01-622.2 provides a mechanism to file an injunction against disclosure of criminal investigative file materials under FOIA.

### Rights of penal institution inmates under FOIA

§2.2-3703(C) generally denies people who are in a local jail or state or federal penitentiary any rights under FOIA. Inmates may still have access to their own health records, and shall have any information rights guaranteed by the Constitution, such as the right to subpoena evidence.

### Enforcement provisions

Any person who believes a public body or public official has violated FOIA may file suit in the general district or circuit court of the public body's or official's locality. § 2.2-3713(A). A FOIA action may commence

[5]Section 2.2-3713(D) does not require a petitioner to prevail on all aspects of his or her claim to be entitled to fees and costs, but only to substantially prevail on the merits of the case. To substantially prevail, a litigant "need not have achieved all of his or he objectives in litigation, but rather, must have been successful regarding the main object of his or her suit." Suffolk City Sch. Bd. v. Wahlstrom, 886 S.E.2d 244 (Va. 2023).

in the name of a person, even if the plaintiff 's attorney, acting on his or her behalf, made the original FOIA request. If the petition or affidavit supporting the petition for mandamus or injunction alleges violations of open meetings then the three day notice to the party shall not be required. The case must be heard initially within seven days of filing. § 2.2-3713(C).

The petitioner must state a claim of a violation with reasonable specificity, pursuant to subsection D. Even though a suit is filed by the complaining citizen, the public body must put on its evidence first and must prove that it has complied with the act. It is not the petitioner's obligation to prove the violation. § 2.2-3713(E).

The court may award an injunction against repeated violations, or even for a single occurrence of noncompliance. Further, if the petitioner wins the case, the court may , and in some cases must, require the public body to pay the petitioner's attorney's fees by the court.[5] If the court determines that an individual public official willfully or knowingly violated FOIA, it is required to impose a civil penalty against that individual in an amount between $500 and $2,000 for a first offense and $2,000 to $5,000 for subsequent offenses. The penalties are to be paid into the Literary Fund. § 2.2-3714. Additional penalties of up to $100 per record altered or destroyed could be assessed if an officer, employer or member of a public body failed to provide records because the records were altered or destroyed with the intent to avoid FOIA.

In addition, if a member of a public body votes to certify a closed session and the certification was not proper, the court may impose on the public body a civil penalty of up to $1,000. §2.2-3714.

Mitigating factors for the fine shall include the reliance of members on (i) opinions of the Attorney General, (ii) court cases substantially supporting the rationale of the public body, and (iii) published opinions of the Freedom of Information Advisory Council.

## Freedom of Information Advisory Council

The Freedom of Information Advisory Council ("FOIA Council") serves primarily as an office to answer questions about FOIA made by government agencies, the public, and the media. An attorney who staffs the office writes the opinions of the council. The opinions are considered be informal, advisory, and nonbinding, although the courts rely on them to considerable extent.

Any officer, employee or member of a public body alleged to knowingly and willful violation FOIA shall be able to introduce any relevant advisory opinion issued as evidence that they did not act knowingly and willfully if the person acted in good faith reliance on the opinion. If a government agency submits records for a review and advice by the FOIA officer, the officer may not release the submitted information without the permission of the agency that submitted them.

The FOIA Council has a toll-free number (866) 448-4100 for requests and a website: http://foiacouncil.dls.virginia. gov/. The council has lists of written opinions on the website that are searchable.

All localities should appoint a FOIA Officer and provide their contact information on the government website. §2.2-3704.2. Each locality that has more than 250 people shall post on its government website the FOIA rights and responsibilities, as well as a link to the FOIA Council online public comment form. §2.2-3704.1.

In addition to issuing opinions, which may be made via telephone, letter or e-mail, the FOIA office conducts FOIA training for the FOIA Officer and any other government officials. Because public officials must read and familiarize themselves with the act as well as attend training once every twoyears, the training sessions are an important opportunity to learn the act's requirements. § 30-179 Training can be conducted by the FOIA Council or the local government attorney. The clerk must main- tain records of the training for 5 years.

## Summary

The Freedom of Information Act includes many requirements and restrictions pertaining to public access to government meetings and information. The fundamental principal woven throughout FOIA is that the public is presumed to have free access to government records and meetings. The Act sets out the specific types of meetings that may be closed to the public and records that may be withheld from disclosure. These exemptions protect the operation of government reasonably well. FOIA will continue to evolve to meet the changing expectations of the public and government agencies.

In the area of electronic information, expect to see continued changes as the General Assembly makes the act more relevant in the fast-changing electronic age. For example, application of the act to the use of e-mail, instant messaging and government posts on social media will likely be revisited many times!

As required under Virginia Code § 2.2-3702, "Any person elected, reelected, appointed or reappointed to any body not excepted from this chapter shall … read and become familiar with the provisions of this chapter." In addition within 2 months of taking office and once every two years all local elected officials must complete training.

The text of the FOIA act follows to assist local officials in complying with this section of the Act.

Additional Code sections that deal with FOIA but that are in other chapters of the Code are included as well.

# Title 2.2. Administration of Government. Chapter 37. Virginia Freedom of Information Act

## § 2.2-3700. Short title; policy.

A. This chapter may be cited as "The Virginia Freedom of Information Act."

B. By enacting this chapter, the General Assembly ensures the people of the Commonwealth ready access to public records in the custody of a public body or its officers and employees, and free entry to meetings of public bodies wherein the business of the people is being conducted. The affairs of government are not intended to be conducted in an atmosphere of secrecy since at all times the public is to be the beneficiary of any action taken at any level of government. Unless a public body or its officers or employees specifically elect to exercise an exemption provided by this chapter or any other statute, every meeting shall be open to the public and all public records shall be available for inspection and copying upon request. All public records and meetings shall be presumed open, unless an exemption is properly invoked.

The provisions of this chapter shall be liberally construed to promote an increased awareness by all persons of governmental activities and afford every opportunity to citizens to witness the operations of government. Any exemption from public access to records or meetings shall be narrowly construed and no record shall be withheld or meeting closed to the public unless specifically made exempt pursuant to this chapter or other specific provision of law. This chapter shall not be construed to discourage the free discussion by government officials or employees of public matters with the citizens of the Commonwealth.

All public bodies and their officers and employees shall make reasonable efforts to reach an agreement with a requester concerning the production of the records requested.

Any ordinance adopted by a local governing body that conflicts with the provisions of this chapter shall be void.

## § 2.2-3701. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"All-virtual public meeting" means a public meeting (i) conducted by a public body, other than those excepted pursuant to subsection C of §2.2-3708.3, using electronic communication means, (ii) during which all members of the public body who participate do so remotely rather than being assembly in one physical location, and (iii) to which public access is provided through electronic communications means.

"Caregiver" means an adult who provides care for a person with a disability as defined in §51.5-40.1. A caregiver shall be either related by blood, marriage, or adoption to or the legally appointed guardian of the person with a disability for whom he is caring.

"Closed meeting" means a meeting from which the public is excluded.

"Electronic communication" means the use of technology having electrical, digital, magnetic, wireless, optical, electromagnetic, or similar capabilities to transmit or receive information.

"Emergency" means an unforeseen circumstance rendering the notice required by this chapter impossible or impracticable and which circumstance requires immediate action.

"Information" as used in the exclusions established by §§ 2.2-3705.1 through 2.2-3705.7, means the content within a public record that references a specifically identified subject matter, and shall not be interpreted to require the production of information that is not embodied in a public record.

"Meeting" or "meetings" means the meetings including work sessions, when sitting physically, or through electronic communication means pursuant to § 2.2-3708.2 or §2.2-3708.3, as a body or entity, or as an informal assemblage of (i) as many as three members or (ii) a quorum, if less than three, of the constituent membership, wherever held, with or without minutes being taken, whether or not votes are cast, of any public body. Neither the gathering of employees of a public body nor the gathering or attendance of two or more members of a public body (a) at any place or function where no part of the purpose of such gathering or attendance is the discussion or transaction of any public business

such gathering or attendance was not called or prearranged with any purpose of discussing or trans- acting any business of the public body and no discussion or transaction of public business takes place among the members of the public body, or (b) at a public forum, informational gathering, candidate appearance, meeting of another public body, or debate, the purpose of which is to inform the electorate or to gather information from the public and not to transact public business or to hold discussions relating to the transaction of public business, where no discussion or transaction of public business takes place among the members of the public body, even though the performance of the members individually or collectively in the conduct of public business may be a topic of discus- sion, debate or question presented by others at such public meeting, shall be deemed a "meeting" subject to the provisions of this chapter. The appointment of more than two members of a public body to another public body does not constitute a meeting of the first public body. For purposes of this definition of "meeting" only, the term "public business" means an activity a public body has undertaken or proposes to undertake on behalf of the people it represents.

"Official public government website" means any Internet site controlled by a public body and used, among other purposes, to post required notices and other content pursuant to this chapter on behalf of the public body.

"Open meeting" or "public meeting" means a meeting at which the public may be present.

"Public body" means any legislative body, authority, board, bureau, commission, district or agency of the Commonwealth or of any political subdivision of the Commonwealth, including counties, cities and towns, municipal councils, governing bodies of counties, school boards and planning commissions; governing boards of public institutions of higher education; and other organizations, corporations or agencies in the Commonwealth supported wholly or principally by public funds. It shall include (i) the Virginia Birth-Related Neurological Injury Compensation Program and its board of directors established pursuant to Chapter 50 (§ 38.2-5000 et seq.) of Title 38.2 and (ii) any committee, subcommittee, or other entity however designated, of the public body created to perform delegated functions of the public body or to advise the public body. It shall not exclude any such committee, subcommittee or entity because it has private sector or citizen members. Corporations organized by the Virginia Retirement System are "public bodies" for purposes of this chapter.

For the purposes of the provisions of this chapter applicable to access to public records, constitutional officers and private police departments as defined in § 9.1-101 shall be considered public bodies and, except as otherwise expressly provided by law, shall have the same obligations to disclose public records as other custodians of public records.

"Public records" means all writings and recordings that consist of letters, words or numbers, or their equivalent, set down by handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostatting, photography, magnetic impulse, optical or magneto-optical form, mechanical or electronic recording or other form of data compilation, however stored, and regardless of physical form or characteristics, prepared or owned by, or in the possession of a public body or its officers, employees or agents in the transaction of public business.

"Regional public body" means a unit of government organized as provided by law within defined boundaries, as determined by the General Assembly, which unit includes two or more localities.

"Remote participation" means participation by an individual member of a public body by electronic communication means in a public meeting where a quorum of the public body is otherwise physically assembled.

"Scholastic records" means those records containing information directly related to a student or an applicant for admission and maintained by a public body that is an educational agency or institution or by a person acting for such agency or institution.

"Trade secret" means the same as that term is defined in the Uniform Trade Secrets Act (§ 59.1-336 et seq.).

### § 2.2-3702. Notice of chapter.

Any person elected, reelected, appointed or reappointed to any body not excepted from this chapter shall (i) be furnished by the public body's administrator or legal counsel with a copy of this chapter within two weeks following election, reelection, appointment or reappointment and (ii) read and become familiar with the provisions of this chapter.

### § 2.2-3703. Public bodies and records to which chapter inapplicable; voter registration and election records; access by persons incarcerated in a state, local, or federal correctional facility.

A. The provisions of this chapter shall not apply to:

1. The Virginia Parole Board (the Board), except that (i) information from the Board providing the number of inmates considered by the Board

for discretionary parole, the number of inmates granted or denied parole, and the number of parolees returned to the custody of the Department of Corrections solely as a result of a determination by the Board of a violation of parole shall be open to inspection and available for release, on a monthly basis, as provided by § 2.2-3704; (ii) all guidance documents, as defined in § 2.2-4101, shall be public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter; (iii) all records concerning the finances of the Board shall be public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter; and (iv) individual Board member votes shall be public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter. The information required by clause (i) shall be furnished by offense, sex, race, age of the inmate, and the locality in which the conviction was obtained, upon the request of the party seeking the information. The information required by clause (ii) shall include all documents establishing the policy of the Board or any change in or clarification of such policy with respect to grant, denial, deferral, revocation, or supervision of parole or geriatric release or the process for consideration thereof, and shall be clearly and conspicuously posted on the Board's website. However, such information shall not include any portion of any document reflecting the application of any policy or policy change or clarification of such policy to an individual inmate;

2. Petit juries and grand juries;
3. Family assessment and planning teams established pursuant to § 2.2-5207;
4. Sexual assault response teams established pursuant to § 15.2-1627.4, and human trafficking response teams established pursuant to §15.2-1627.6, except that records relating to (i) protocols and policies of the sexual assault or human trafficking response team and (ii) guidelines for the community's response established by the sexual assault response team shall be public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter;
5. Multidisciplinary child sexual abuse response teams established pursuant to § 15.2-1627.5;
6. The Virginia State Crime Commission; and
7. The records maintained by the clerks of the courts of record, as defined in § 1-212, for which clerks are custodians under § 17.1-242, and courts not of record, as defined in § 16.1-69.5, for which clerks are custodians under § 16.1-69.54, including those transferred for storage, maintenance, or archiving. Such records shall be requested in accordance with the provisions of §§ 16.1-69.54:1 and § 17.1-208, as appropriate. However, other records maintained by the clerks of such courts shall be public records and subject to the provisions of this chapter.

B. Public access to voter registration and election records shall be governed by the provisions of Title 24.2 and this chapter. The provisions of Title 24.2 shall be controlling in the event of any conflict.

C. No provision of this chapter or Chapter 21 (§ 30-178 et seq.) of Title 30 shall be construed to afford any rights to any person (i) incarcerated in a state, local or federal correctional facility, whether or not such facility is (a) located in the Commonwealth or (b) operated pursuant to the Corrections Private Management Act (§ 53.1-261 et seq.) or (ii) civilly committed pursuant to the Sexually Violent Predators Act (§ 37.2-900 et seq.). However, this subsection shall not be construed to prevent such persons from exercising their constitutionally protected rights, including, but not limited to, their right to call for evidence in their favor in a criminal prosecution.

### § 2.2-3703.1. Disclosure pursuant to court order or subpoena.

Nothing contained in this chapter shall have any bearing upon disclosures required to be made pursuant to any court order or subpoena. No discretionary exemption from mandatory disclosure shall be construed to make records covered by such discretionary exemption privileged under the rules of discovery, unless disclosure is otherwise prohibited by law.

### § 2.2-3704. Public records to be open to inspection; procedure for requesting records and responding to request; charges; transfer of records for storage, etc.

A. Except as otherwise specifically provided by law, all public records shall be open to citizens of the Commonwealth, representatives of newspapers and magazines with circulation in the Commonwealth, and representatives of radio and television stations broadcasting in or into the Commonwealth during the regular office hours of the custodian of such records. Access to such records shall be provided by the custodian in accordance with this chapter by inspection or by providing copies of the requested records, at the option of the requester. The custodian may require the requester to provide his name and legal address. The custodian of such records shall take all necessary precautions for their preservation and safekeeping.

B. A request for public records shall identify the requested records with reasonable specificity. The request need not make reference to this chapter in order to invoke the provisions of this chapter or to impose the time limits for response by a public body. Any public body that is subject to this chapter and that is the custodian of the requested records shall promptly, but in all cases within five working days of receiving a request, provide the requested records to the requester or make one of the following responses in writing:

1. The requested records are being entirely withheld. Such response shall identify with reasonable particularity the volume and subject matter of withheld records, and cite, as to each category of withheld records, the specific Code section that authorizes the withholding of the records.
2. The requested records are being provided in part and are being withheld in part. Such response shall identify with reasonable particularity the subject matter of withheld portions, and cite, as to each category of withheld records, the specific Code section that authorizes the withholding of the records.
3. The requested records could not be found or do not exist. However, if the public body that received the request knows that another public body has the requested records, the response shall include contact information for the other public body.
4. It is not practically possible to provide the requested records or to determine whether they are available within the five-work-day period. Such response shall specify the conditions that make a response impossible. If the response is made within five working days, the public body shall have an additional seven work days or, in the case of a request for criminal investigative files pursuant to § 2.2-3706.1, 60 work days in which to provide one of the four preceding responses.

C. Any public body may petition the appropriate court for additional time to respond to a request for records when the request is for an extraordinary volume of records or requires an extraordinarily lengthy search, and a response by the public body within the time required by this chapter will prevent the public body from meeting its operational responsibilities. Before proceeding with the petition, however, the public body shall make reasonable efforts to reach an agreement with the requester concerning the production of the records requested.

D. Subject to the provisions of subsection G, no public body shall be required to create a new record if the record does not already exist. However, a public body may abstract or summarize information under such terms and conditions as agreed between the requester and the public body.

E. Failure to respond to a request for records shall be deemed a denial of the request and shall constitute a violation of this chapter.

F. Except with regard to scholastic records requested pursuant to subdivision A 1 of §2.2-3705.4 that must be made available for inspection pursuant to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. §1232g) and such requests for scholastic records by a parent or legal guardian of a minor student or by a student who is 18 years of age or older, a public body may make reasonable charges not to exceed its actual cost incurred in accessing, duplicating, supplying, or searching for the requested records and shall make all reasonable efforts to supply the requested records at the lowest possible cost. No public body shall impose any extraneous, intermediary, or surplus fees or expenses to recoup the general costs associated with creating or maintaining records or transacting the general business of the public body. Any duplicating fee charged by a public body shall not exceed the actual cost of duplication. The public body may also make a reasonable charge for the cost incurred in supplying records produced from a geographic information system at the request of anyone other than the owner of the land that is the subject of the request. However, such charges shall not exceed the actual cost to the public body in supplying such records, except that the public body may charge, on a pro rata per acre basis, for the cost of creating topographical maps developed by the public body, for such maps or portions thereof, which encompass a contiguous area greater than 50 acres. Prior to conducting a search for records, the public body shall notify the requester in writing that the public body may make reasonable charges not to exceed its actual cost incurred in accessing, duplicating, supplying, or searching for requested records and inquire of the requester whether he would like to request a cost estimate in advance of supplying the requested records. The public body shall provide the requester with a cost estimate if requested. The period within which the public body shall respond under this section shall be tolled for the amount of time that elapses between notice of the cost estimate and the response of the requester. If the public body receives no response from the requester within 30 days of sending the cost estimate, the request shall be deemed to be withdrawn. Any costs incurred by the public body in estimating the cost of supplying the

requested records shall be applied toward the overall charges to be paid by the requester for the supplying of such requested records. Any local public body that charges for the production of records pursuant to this section may provide an electronic method of payment through which all payments for the production of such records to such locality may be made. For purposes of this subsection, "electronic method of payment" means any kind of noncash payment that does not involve a paper check and includes credit cards, debit cards, direct deposit, direct debit, electronic checks, and payment through the use of telephonic or similar communications.

G. Public records maintained by a public body in an electronic data processing system, computer database, or any other structured collection of data shall be made available to a requester at a reasonable cost, not to exceed the actual cost in accordance with subsection F. When electronic or other databases are combined or contain exempt and nonexempt records, the public body may provide access to the exempt records if not otherwise prohibited by law, but shall provide access to the nonexempt records as provided by this chapter

Public bodies shall produce nonexempt records maintained in an electronic database in any tangible medium identified by the requester, including, where the public body has the capability, the option of posting the records on a website or delivering the records through an electronic mail address provided by the requester, if that medium is used by the public body in the regular course of business. No public body shall be required to produce records from an electronic database in a format not regularly used by the public body. However, the public body shall make reasonable efforts to provide records in any format under such terms and conditions as agreed between the requester and public body, including the payment of reasonable costs. The excision of exempt fields of information from a database or the conversion of data from one available format to another shall not be deemed the creation, preparation, or compilation of a new public record.

H. In any case where a public body determines in advance that charges for producing the requested records are likely to exceed $200, the public body may, before continuing to process the request, require the requester to pay a deposit not to exceed the amount of the advance determination. The deposit shall be credited toward the final cost of supplying the requested records. The period within which the public body shall respond under this section shall be tolled for the amount of time that elapses between notice of the advance determination and the response of the requester.

I. Before processing a request for records, a public body may require the requester to pay any amounts owed to the public body for previous requests for records that remain unpaid 30 days or more after billing.

J. In the event a public body has transferred possession of public records to any entity, including but not limited to any other public body, for storage, maintenance, or archiving, the public body initiating the transfer of such records shall remain the custodian of such records for purposes of responding to requests for public records made pursuant to this chapter and shall be responsible for retrieving and supplying such public records to the requester. In the event a public body has transferred public records for storage, maintenance, or archiving and such transferring public body is no longer in existence, any public body that is a successor to the transferring public body shall be deemed the custodian of such records. In the event no successor entity exists, the entity in possession of the public records shall be deemed the custodian of the records for purposes of compliance with this chapter, and shall retrieve and supply such records to the requester. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to apply to records transferred to the Library of Virginia for permanent archiving pursuant to the duties imposed by the Virginia Public Records Act (§ 42.1-76 et seq.). In accordance with § 42.1-79, the Library of Virginia shall be the custodian of such permanently archived records and shall be responsible for responding to requests for such records made pursuant to this chapter.

### § 2.2-3704.1. Posting of notice of rights and responsibilities by state and local public bodies; assistance by the Freedom of Information Advisory Council.

A. All state public bodies subject to the provisions of this chapter, any county or city, any town with a population of more than 250, and any school board shall make available the following information to the public upon request and shall post a link to such information on the homepage of their respective official public government websites:

1. A plain English explanation of the rights of a requester under this chapter, the procedures to obtain public records from the public body, and the responsibilities of the public body in complying with this chapter. For purposes of this section, "plain English" means written in nontechnical, readily understandable language using words of common everyday usage and avoiding legal terms and phrases or other terms and words of art whose usage or special meaning primarily is

limited to a particular field or profession;

2. Contact information for the FOIA officer designated by the public body pursuant to § 2.2-3704.2 to (i) assist a requester in making a request for records or (ii) respond to requests for public records;
3. A general description, summary, list, or index of the types of public records maintained by such public body;
4. A general description, summary, list, or index of any exemptions in law that permit or require such public records to be withheld from release;
5. Any policy the public body has concerning the type of public records it routinely withholds from release as permitted by this chapter or other law; and
6. The following statement: "A public body may make reasonable charges not to exceed its actual cost incurred in accessing, duplicating, supplying, or searching for the requested records and shall make all reasonable efforts to supply the requested records at the lowest possible cost. No public body shall impose any extraneous, intermediary, or surplus fees or expenses to recoup the general costs associated with creating or maintaining records or transacting the general business of the public body. Any duplicating fee charged by a public body shall not exceed the actual cost of duplication. Prior to conducting a search for records, the public body shall notify the requester in writing that the public body may make reasonable charges not to exceed its actual cost incurred in accessing, duplicating, supplying, or searching for requested records and inquire of the requester whether he would like to request a cost estimate in advance of the supplying of the requested records as set forth in subsection F of § 2.2-3704 of the Code of Virginia." and
7. A written policy (i) explaining how the public body assesses charges for accessing or searching for requested records and (ii) noting the current fee charged, if any, for accessing and searching for such requested records.

B. Any state public body subject to the provisions of this chapter and any county or city, and any town with a population of more than 250, shall post a link on its official public government website to the online public comment form on the Freedom of Information Advisory Council's website to enable any requester to comment on the quality of assistance provided to the requester by the public body.

C. The Freedom of Information Advisory Council, created pursuant to § 30-178, shall assist in the development and implementation of the provisions of subsection A, upon request.

## § 2.2-3704.01. Records containing both excluded and nonexcluded information; duty to redact.

No provision of this chapter is intended, nor shall it be construed or applied, to authorize a public body to withhold a public record in its entirety on the grounds that some portion of the public record is excluded from disclosure by this chapter or by any other provision of law. A public record may be withheld from disclosure in its entirety only to the extent that an exclusion from disclosure under this chapter or other provision of law applies to the entire content of the public record. Otherwise, only those portions of the public record containing information subject to an exclusion under this chapter or other provision of law may be withheld, and all portions of the public record that are not so excluded shall be disclosed.

## § 2.2-3704.2. Public bodies to designate FOIA officer.

A. All state public bodies, including state authorities, that are subject to the provisions of this chapter and all local public bodies and regional public bodies that are subject to the provisions of this chapter shall designate and publicly identify one or more Freedom of Information Act officers (FOIA officer) whose responsibility is to serve as a point of contact for members of the public in requesting public records and to coordinate the public body's compliance with the provisions of this chapter.

B. For such state public bodies, the name and contact information of the public body's FOIA officer to whom members of the public may direct requests for public records and who will oversee the public body's compliance with the provisions of this chapter shall be made available to the public upon request and be posted on the respective public body's official public government website at the time of designation and maintained thereafter on such website for the duration of the designation.

C. For such local public bodies and regional public bodies, the name and contact information of the public body's FOIA officer to whom members of the public may direct requests for public records and who will oversee the public body's compliance with the provisions of this chapter shall be made available in a way reasonably calculated to provide notice to the public,

including posting at the public body's place of business, posting on its official public government website, or including such information in its publications.

D. For the purposes of this section, local public bodies shall include constitutional officers.

E. Any such FOIA officer shall possess specific knowledge of the provisions of this chapter and be trained at least once during each consecutive period of two calendar years commencing with the date on which he last completed a training session by legal counsel for the public body or the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council (the Council) or through an online course offered by the Council. Any such training shall document that the training required by this subsection has been fulfilled.

F. The name and contact information of a FOIA officer trained by legal counsel of a public body shall be (i) submitted to the Council by July 1 of the year a FOIA officer is initially trained on a form developed by the Council for that purpose and (ii) updated in a timely manner in the event of any changes to such information.

G. The Council shall maintain on its website a listing of all FOIA officers, including name, contact information, and the name of the public body such FOIA officers serve.

## § 2.2-3704.3. Training for local officials.

A. The Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council (the Council) or the local government attorney shall provide in-person or online training sessions for local elected officials; the executive directors and members of industrial development authorities and economic development authorities, as created by the Industrial Development and Revenue Bond Act (§ 15.2-4900 et seq.); and members of any boards governing any authority established pursuant to the Park Authorities Act (§ 15.2-5700 et seq.) on the provisions of this chapter.

B. Each local elected official and the executive director and members of each industrial development authority and economic development authority, as created by the Industrial Development and Revenue Bond Act, and members of the any boards governing any authority established pursuant to the Park Authorities Act (§ 15.2-5700 et seq.) shall complete a training session described in subsection A within two months after assuming the local elected office and thereafter at least once during each consecutive period of two calendar years commencing with the date on which he last completed a training session, for as long as he holds such office. No penalty shall be imposed on a local elected official or an executive director or member of an industrial development authority or an economic development authority for failing to complete a training session.

C. The clerk of each governing body or school board shall maintain records indicating the names of elected officials and executive directors and members of industrial development authorities and economic development authorities, and members of any boards governing any authority established pursuant to the Park Authorities Act (§15.2-5700 et seq.) subject to the training requirements in subsection B and the dates on which each such official completed training sessions satisfying such requirements. Such records shall be maintained for five years in the office of the clerk of the respective governing body or school board.

D. For purposes of this section, "local elected officials" shall include constitutional officers.

## § 2.2-3705.1. Exclusions to application of chapter; exclusions of general application to public bodies.

The following information contained in a public record is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law. Redaction of information excluded under this section from a public record shall be conducted in accordance with § 2.2-3704.01.

1. Personnel information concerning identifiable individuals, except that access shall not be denied to the person who is the subject thereof. Any person who is the subject of such information and who is 18 years of age or older may waive, in writing, the protections afforded by this subdivision. If the protections are so waived, such information shall be disclosed. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to authorize the withholding of any resumes or applications submitted by persons who are appointed by the Governor pursuant to §§ 2.2-106 or § 2.2-107.

No provision of this chapter or any provision of Chapter 38 (§ 2.2-3800 et seq.) shall be construed as denying public access to (i) contracts between a public body and its officers or employees, other than contracts settling public employee employment disputes held confidential as personnel records under § 2.2-3705.1; (ii) records of the name, position, job classification, official salary, or rate of pay of, and records of the allowances or reimbursements for expenses paid to, any officer, official, or employee of a public body; or (iii) the compensation or benefits paid by any corporation organized by the Virginia Retirement System or its officers or employees. The provisions of this subdivision, however,

shall not require public access to records of the official salaries or rates of pay of public employees whose annual rate of pay is $10,000 or less.

2. Written advice of legal counsel to state, regional or local public bodies or the officers or employees of such public bodies, and any other information protected by the attorney-client privilege.

3. Legal memoranda and other work product compiled specifically for use in litigation or for use in an active administrative investigation concerning a matter that is properly the subject of a closed meeting under § 2.2-3711.

4. Any test or examination used, administered or prepared by any public body for purposes of evaluation of (i) any student or any student's performance, (ii) any employee or employment seeker's qualifications or aptitude for employment, retention, or promotion, or (iii) qualifications for any license or certificate issued by a public body.

As used in this subdivision, "test or examination" shall include (a) any scoring key for any such test or examination and (b) any other document that would jeopardize the security of the test or examination. Nothing contained in this subdivision shall prohibit the release of test scores or results as provided by law, or limit access to individual records as provided by law. However, the subject of such employment tests shall be entitled to review and inspect all records relative to his performance on such employment tests.

When, in the reasonable opinion of such public body, any such test or examination no longer has any potential for future use, and the security of future tests or examinations will not be jeopardized, the test or examination shall be made available to the public. However, minimum competency tests administered to public school children shall be made available to the public contemporaneously with statewide release of the scores of those taking such tests, but in no event shall such tests be made available to the public later than six months after the administration of such tests.

5. Records recorded in or compiled exclusively for use in closed meetings lawfully held pursuant to § 2.2-3711. However, no record that is otherwise open to inspection under this chapter shall be deemed exempt by virtue of the fact that it has been reviewed or discussed in a closed meeting.

6. Vendor proprietary information software that may be in the public records of a public body. For the purpose of this subdivision, "vendor proprietary information software" means computer programs acquired from a vendor for purposes of processing data for agencies or political subdivisions of the Commonwealth.

7. Computer software developed by or for a state agency, public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth, or political subdivision of the Commonwealth.

8. Appraisals and cost estimates of real property subject to a proposed purchase, sale, or lease, prior to the completion of such purchase, sale, or lease.

9. Information concerning reserves established in specific claims administered by the Department of the Treasury through its Division of Risk Management as provided in Article 5 (§ 2.2-1832 et seq.) of Chapter 18, or by any county, city, or town; and investigative notes, correspondence and information furnished in confidence with respect to an investigation of a claim or a potential claim against a public body's insurance policy or self-insurance plan. However, nothing in this subdivision shall prevent the disclosure of information taken from inactive reports upon expiration of the period of limitations for the filing of a civil suit.

10. Personal contact information furnished to a public body or any of its members for the purpose of receiving electronic communications from the public body or any of its members, unless the recipient of such electronic communications indicates his approval for the public body to disclose such information. However, access shall not be denied to the person who is the subject of the record. As used in this subdivision, "personal contact information" means the information provided to the public body or any of its members for the purpose of receiving electronic communications from the public body or any of its members and includes home or business (i) address, (ii) email address, or (iii) telephone number or comparable number assigned to any other electronic communication device.

11. Communications and materials required to be kept confidential pursuant to § 2.2-4119 of the Virginia Administrative Dispute Resolution Act (§ 2.2-4115 et seq.).

12. Information relating to the negotiation and award of a specific contract where competition or bargaining is involved and where the release of such information would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. Such information shall not be withheld after the public body has made a decision to award or not to award the contract. In the case of procurement transactions conducted pursuant to the Virginia Public Procurement Act (§ 2.2-4300 et seq.), the provisions of this subdivision shall not apply, and any release of information relating to such transactions shall be governed by the Virginia Public Procurement Act.

13. Account numbers or routing information for any credit card, debit card, or other account with a financial institution of any person or public body. However, access shall not be denied to the person who is the subject of the information. For the purposes of this subdivision, "financial institution" means any organization authorized to do business under state or federal laws relating to financial institutions, including, without limitation, banks and trust companies, savings banks, savings and loan companies or associations, and credit unions.

14. Names and data of any kind that directly or indirectly identify an individual as a member, supporter, or volunteer of, or donor of financial or nonfinancial support to, any entity exempt from federal income tax pursuant to § 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code, except for those entities established by or for, or in support of, a public body as authorized by state law.

## § 2.2-3705.2. Exclusions to application of chapter; records relating to public safety.

The following information contained in a public record is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law. Redaction of information excluded under this section from a public record shall be conducted in accordance with § 2.2-3704.01.

1. Confidential information, including victim identity, provided to or obtained by staff in a rape crisis center or a program for battered spouses.

2. Information that describes the design, function, operation, or access control features of any security system, whether manual or automated, which is used to control access to or use of any automated data processing or telecommunications system.

3. Information that would disclose the security aspects of a system safety program plan adopted pursuant to Federal Transit Administration regulations by the Commonwealth's designated Rail Fixed Guideway Systems Safety Oversight agency; and information in the possession of such agency, the release of which would jeopardize the success of an ongoing investigation of a rail accident or other incident threatening railway safety.

4. Information concerning security plans and specific assessment components of school safety audits, as provided in § 22.1-279.8.

Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prevent the disclosure of information relating to the effectiveness of security plans after (i) any school building or property has been subjected to fire, explosion, natural disaster, or other catastrophic event or (ii) any person on school property has suffered or been threatened with any personal injury.

5. Information concerning the mental health assessment of an individual subject to commitment as a sexually violent predator under Chapter 9 (§ 37.2-900 et seq.) of Title 37.2 held by the Commitment Review Committee; except that in no case shall information identifying the victims of a sexually violent predator be disclosed.

6. Subscriber data provided directly or indirectly by a communications services provider to a public body that operates a 911 or E-911 emergency dispatch system or an emergency notification or reverse 911 system if the data is in a form not made available by the communications services provider to the public generally. Nothing in this subdivision shall prevent the disclosure of subscriber data generated in connection with specific calls to a 911 emergency system, where the requester is seeking to obtain public records about the use of the system in response to a specific crime, emergency or other event as to which a citizen has initiated a 911 call.

For the purposes of this subdivision:

"Communications services provider" means the same as that term is defined in § 58.1-647.

"Subscriber data" means the name, address, telephone number, and any other information identifying a subscriber of a communications services provider.

7. Subscriber data collected by a local governing body in accordance with the Enhanced Public Safety Telephone Services Act (§ 56-484.12 et seq.) and other identifying information of a personal, medical, or financial nature provided to a local governing body in connection with a 911 or E-911 emergency dispatch system or an emergency notification or reverse 911 system if such records are not otherwise publicly available.

Nothing in this subdivision shall prevent the disclosure of subscriber data generated in connection with specific calls to a 911 emergency system, where the requester is seeking to obtain public records about the use of the system in response to a specific crime, emergency or other event as to which a citizen has initiated a 911 call.

For the purposes of this subdivision:

"Communications services provider" means the same as that term is defined in § 58.1-647.

"Subscriber data" means the name, address, telephone number, and any other information identifying a subscriber of a communications services provider.

8. Information held by the Virginia Military Advisory Council or any commission created by executive

order for the purpose of studying and making recommendations regarding preventing closure or realignment of federal military and national security installations and facilities located in Virginia and relocation of such facilities to Virginia, or a local or regional military affairs organization appointed by a local governing body, that would (i) reveal strategies under consideration or development by the Council or such commission or organizations to prevent the closure or realignment of federal military installations located in Virginia or the relocation of national security facilities located in Virginia, to limit the adverse economic effect of such realignment, closure, or relocation, or to seek additional tenant activity growth from the Department of Defense or federal government or (ii) disclose trade secrets provided to the Council or such commission or organizations in connection with their work.

In order to invoke the trade secret protection provided by clause (ii), the submitting entity shall, in writing and at the time of submission (a) invoke this exclusion, (b) identify with specificity the information for which such protection is sought, and (c) state the reason why such protection is necessary. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prevent the disclosure of all or part of any record, other than a trade secret that has been specifically identified as required by this subdivision, after the Department of Defense or federal agency has issued a final, unappealable decision, or in the event of litigation, a court of competent jurisdiction has entered a final, unappealable order concerning the closure, realignment, or expansion of the military installation or tenant activities, or the relocation of the national security facility, for which records are sought.

9. Information, as determined by the State Comptroller, that describes the design, function, operation, or implementation of internal controls over the Commonwealth's financial processes and systems, and the assessment of risks and vulnerabilities of those controls, including the annual assessment of internal controls mandated by the State Comptroller, if disclosure of such information would jeopardize the security of the Commonwealth's financial assets. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to authorize the withholding of (i) the name of the public employee, officer, official as it appears on purchase card statement or other payment record or (ii) the description of individual purchases. Additionally, records relating to the investigation of and findings concerning the soundness of any fiscal process shall be disclosed in a form that does not compromise internal controls. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prohibit the Auditor of Public Accounts or the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission from re- porting internal control deficiencies discovered during the course of an audit.

10. Information relating to the Statewide Agencies Radio System (STARS) or any other similar local or regional public safety communications system that (i) describes the design, function, programming, operation, or access control features of the overall system, components, structures, individual networks, and subsystems of the STARS or any other similar local or regional communications system or (ii) relates to radio frequencies assigned to or utilized by STARS or any other similar local or regional communications system, code plugs, circuit routing, addressing schemes, talk groups, fleet maps, encryption, or programming maintained by or utilized by STARS or any other similar local or regional public safety communications system.

11. Information concerning a salaried or volunteer Fire/EMS company or Fire/EMS department if disclosure of such information would reveal the telephone numbers for cellular telephones, pagers, or comparable portable communication devices provided to its personnel for use in the performance of their official duties.

12. Information concerning the disaster recovery plans or the evacuation plans in the event of fire, explosion, natural disaster, or other catastrophic event for hospitals and nursing homes regulated by the Board of Health pursuant to Chapter 5 (§ 32.1-123 et seq.) of Title 32.1 provided to the Department of Health. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prevent the disclosure of information relating to the effectiveness of executed evacuation plans after the occurrence of fire, explosion, natural disaster, or other catastrophic event.

13. Records received by the Department of Criminal Justice Services pursuant to §§ 9.1-184, 22.1-79.4, and 22.1-279.8 or for purposes of evaluating threat assessment teams established by a public institution of higher education pursuant to § 23.1-805 or by a private nonprofit institution of higher education, to the extent such records reveal security plans, walk-through checklists, or vulnerability and threat assessment components.

14. Information contained in (i) engineering, architectural, or construction drawings; (ii) operational, procedural, tactical planning, or training manuals; (iii) staff meeting minutes; or (iv) other records that reveal any of the following, the disclosure of which would jeopardize the safety or security of any person; governmental facility, building, or structure or persons using such facility, building, or structure; or public or private commercial office, multifamily residential, or retail building or its occupants:

a. Critical infrastructure information or the location

or operation of security equipment and systems of any public building, structure, or information storage facility, including ventilation systems, fire protection equipment, mandatory building emergency equipment or systems, elevators, electrical systems, telecommunications equipment and systems, or utility equipment and systems;

b. Vulnerability assessments, information not lawfully available to the public regarding specific cybersecurity threats or vulnerabilities, or security plans and measures of an entity, facility, building structure, information technology system, or software program;

c. Surveillance techniques, personnel deployments, alarm or security systems or technologies, or operational or transportation plans or protocols; or

d. Interconnectivity, network monitoring, network operation centers, master sites, or systems related to the Statewide Agencies Radio System (STARS) or any other similar local or regional public safety communications system.

The same categories of records of any person or entity submitted to a public body for the purpose of antiterrorism response planning or cybersecurity planning or protection may be withheld from disclosure if such person or entity in writing (a) invokes the protections of this subdivision, (b) identifies with specificity the records or portions thereof for which protection is sought, and (c) states with reasonable particularity why the protection of such records from public disclosure is necessary to meet the objective of antiterrorism, cybersecurity planning or protection, or critical infrastructure information security and resilience. Such statement shall be a public record and shall be disclosed upon request.

Any public body receiving a request for records excluded under clauses (a) and (b) of this subdivision 14 shall notify the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security or his designee of such request and the response made by the public body in accordance with § 2.2-3704.

Nothing in this subdivision 14 shall prevent the disclosure of records relating to (1) the structural or environmental soundness of any such facility, building, or structure or (2) an inquiry into the performance of such facility, building, or structure after it has been subjected to fire, explosion, natural disaster, or other catastrophic event.

As used in this subdivision, "critical infrastructure information" means the same as that term is defined in 6 U.S.C. § 131.

15. Information held by the Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority that is categorized as classified or sensitive but unclassified, including national security, defense, and foreign policy information, provided that such information is exempt under the federal Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552.

### § 2.2-3705.3. Exclusions to application of chapter; records relating to administrative investigations.

The following information contained in a public record is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law. Redaction of information excluded under this section from a public record shall be conducted in accordance with § 2.2-3704.01.

1. Information relating to investigations of appli- cants for licenses and permits, and of all licensees and permittees, made by or submitted to the Virginia Alco- holic Beverage Control Authority, the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority, the Virginia Lottery pursuant to Chapter 40 (§ 58.1-4000 et seq.) and Chapter 41 (§ 58.1-4100 et seq.) of Title 58.1, the Virginia Racing Commission, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services relating to investigations and applications pursuant to Article 1.1:1 (§ 18.2-340.15 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 18.2, or the Private Security Services Unit of the Department of Criminal Justice Services.

2. Records of active investigations being conducted by the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority or by the Department of Health Professions or by any health regulatory board in the Commonwealth pursuant to § 54.1-108.

3. Investigator notes, and other correspondence and information, furnished in confidence with respect to an active investigation of individual employment discrimination complaints made to the Department of Human Resource Management, to such personnel of any local public body, including local school boards, as are responsible for conducting such investigations in confidence, or to any public institution of higher education. However, nothing in this subdivision shall prevent the disclosure of information taken from inactive reports in a form that does not reveal the identity of charging parties, persons supplying the information, or other individuals involved in the investigation.

4. Records of active investigations being conducted by the Department of Medical Assistance Services pursuant to Chapter 10 (§ 32.1-323 et seq.) of Title 32.1.

5. Investigative notes and other correspondence and information furnished in confidence with respect to an investigation or conciliation process involving an alleged unlawful discriminatory practice under the Virginia Human Rights Act (§ 2.2-3900 et seq.) or under any local ordinance adopted in accordance with the authority specified in § 2.2-524, or adopted pursuant to § 15.2-965, or adopted prior to July 1, 1987, in accordance with applicable law, relating to local human rights or human relations commissions. However, nothing in this subdivision shall prevent the distribution of information taken from inactive reports in a form that does not reveal the identity of the parties involved or other persons supplying information.

6. Information relating to studies and investigations by the Virginia Lottery of (i) lottery agents, (ii) lottery vendors, (iii) lottery crimes under §§ 58.1-4014 through § 58.1-4018, (iv) defects in the law or regulations that cause abuses in the administration and operation of the lottery and any evasions of such provisions, or (v) the use of the lottery as a subterfuge for organized crime and illegal gambling where such information has not been publicly released, published or copyrighted. All studies and investigations referred to under clauses (iii), (iv), and (v) shall be open to inspection and copying upon completion of the study or investigation.

7. Investigative notes, correspondence and information furnished in confidence, and records otherwise exempted by this chapter or any Virginia statute, provided to or produced by or for (i) the Auditor of Public Accounts; (ii) the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission; (iii) an appropriate authority as defined in § 2.2-3010 with respect to an allegation of wrongdoing or abuse under the Fraud and Abuse Whistle Blower Protection Act (§ 2.2-3009 et seq.); (iv) the Office of the State Inspector General with respect to an investigation initiated through the Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline or an investigation initiated pursuant to Chapter 3.2 (§ 2.2-307 et seq.); (v) internal auditors appointed by the head of a state agency or by any public institution of higher education; (vi) the committee or the auditor with respect to an investigation or audit conducted pursuant to § 15.2-825; or (vii) the auditors, appointed by the local governing body of any county, city, or town or a school board, who by charter, ordinance, or statute have responsibility for conducting an investigation of any officer, department, or program of such body. Information contained in completed investigations shall be disclosed in a form that does not reveal the identity of the complainants or persons supplying information to investigators. Unless disclosure is excluded by this subdivision, the information disclosed shall include the agency involved, the identity of the person who is the subject of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, and the actions taken to resolve the complaint. If an investigation does not lead to corrective action, the identity of the person who is the subject of the complaint may be released only with the consent of the subject person. Local governing bodies shall adopt guidelines to govern the disclosure required by this subdivision.

8. The names and personal contact information of complainants furnished in confidence with respect to an investigation of individual zoning enforcement complaints or complaints relating to the Uniform Statewide Building Code (§ 36-97 et seq.) or the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (§ 27-94 et seq.) made to a local governing body. As used in this subdivision "personal contact information" includes the complainant's home or business (i) address, (ii) email address, or (iii) telephone number or comparable number assigned to any other electronic communication device.

9. Records of active investigations being conducted by the Department of Criminal Justice Services pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.), Article 4.1 (§ 9.1-150.1 et seq.), Article 11 (§ 9.1-185 et seq.), and Article 12 (§ 9.1-186 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1.

10. Information furnished to or prepared by the Board of Education pursuant to subsection D of § 22.1-253.13:3 in connection with the review or investigation of any alleged breach in security, unauthorized alteration, or improper administration of tests by local school board employees responsible for the distribution or administration of the tests. However, this section shall not prohibit the disclosure of such information to (i) a local school board or division superintendent for the purpose of permitting such board or superintendent to consider or to take personnel action with regard to an employee or (ii) any requester, after the conclusion of a review or investigation, in a form that (a) does not reveal the identity of any person making a complaint or supplying information to the Board on a confidential basis and (b) does not compromise the security of any test mandated by the Board.

11. Information contained in (i) an application for licensure or renewal of a license for teachers and other school personnel, including transcripts or other documents submitted in support of an application, and (ii) an active investigation conducted by or for the Board of Education related to the denial, suspension, cancellation, revocation, or reinstatement of teacher and other school personnel licenses including investigator notes and other correspondence and information, furnished in confidence with respect to such investigation. How-

ever, this subdivision shall not prohibit the disclosure of such (a) application information to the applicant at his own expense or (b) investigation information to a local school board or division superintendent for the purpose of permitting such board or superintendent to consider or to take personnel action with regard to an employee. Information contained in completed investigations shall be disclosed in a form that does not reveal the identity of any complainant or person supplying information to investigators. The completed investigation information disclosed shall include information regarding the school or facility involved, the identity of the person who was the subject of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, and the actions taken to resolve the complaint. If an investigation fails to support a complaint or does not lead to corrective action, the identity of the person who was the subject of the complaint may be released only with the consent of the subject person. No personally identifiable information regarding a current or former student shall be released except as permitted by state or federal law.

12. Information provided in confidence and related to an investigation by the Attorney General under Article 1 (§ 3.2-4200 et seq.) or Article 3 (§ 3.2-4204 et seq.) of Chapter 42 of Title 3.2, Article 10 (§ 18.2-246.6 et seq.) of Chapter 6 or Chapter 13 (§ 18.2-512 et seq.) of Title 18.2, or Article 1 (§ 58.1-1000) of Chapter 10 of Title 58.1. However, information related to an investigation that has been inactive for more than six months shall, upon request, be disclosed provided such disclosure is not otherwise prohibited by law and does not reveal the identity of charging parties, complainants, persons supplying information, witnesses, or other individuals involved in the investigation.

13. Records of active investigations being conducted by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services pursuant to Chapter 4 (§ 37.2-400 et seq.) of Title 37.2.

### § 2.2-3705.4. Exclusions to application of chapter; educational records and certain records of educational institutions.

A. The following information contained in a public record is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except as provided in subsection B or where such disclosure is otherwise prohibited by law. Redaction of information excluded under this section from a public record shall be conducted in accordance with § 2.2-3704.01.

1. Scholastic records containing information concerning identifiable individuals, except that such access shall not be denied to the person who is the subject thereof, or the parent or legal guardian of the student. However, no student shall have access to (i) financial records of a parent or guardian or (ii) records of instructional, supervisory, and administrative personnel and educational personnel ancillary thereto, that are in the sole possession of the maker thereof and that are not accessible or revealed to any other person except a substitute.

The parent or legal guardian of a student may prohibit, by written request, the release of any individual information regarding that student until the student reaches the age of 18 years. For scholastic records of students under the age of 18 years, the right of access may be asserted only by his legal guardian or parent, including a noncustodial parent, unless such parent's parental rights have been terminated or a court of competent jurisdiction has restricted or denied such access. For scholastic records of students who are emancipated or attending a public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth, the right of access may be asserted by the student.

Any person who is the subject of any scholastic record and who is 18 years of age or older may waive, in writing, the protections afforded by this subdivision. If the protections are so waived, such records shall be disclosed.

2. Confidential letters and statements of recommendation placed in the records of educational agencies or institutions respecting (i) admission to any educational agency or institution, (ii) an application for employment or promotion, or (iii) receipt of an honor or honorary recognition.

3. Information held by the Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Committee that would reveal personally identifiable information, including scholarship applications, personal financial information, and confidential correspondence and letters of recommendation.

4. Information of a proprietary nature produced or collected by or for faculty or staff of public institutions of higher education, other than the institutions' financial or administrative records, in the conduct of or as a result of study or research on medical, scientific, technical or scholarly issues, whether sponsored by the institution alone or in conjunction with a governmental body or a private concern, where such information has not been pub-

licly released, published, copyrighted or patented.

5. Information held by the University of Virginia or the University of Virginia Medical Center or Eastern Virginia Medical School, as the case may be, that contain proprietary, business-related information pertaining to the operations of the University of Virginia Medical Center or Eastern Virginia Medical School, as the case may be, including business development or marketing strategies and activities with existing or future joint venturers, partners, or other parties with whom the University of Virginia Medical Center or Eastern Virginia Medical School, as the case may be, has formed, or forms, any arrangement for the delivery of health care, if disclosure of such information would be harmful to the competitive position of the University of Virginia Medical Center or Eastern Virginia Medical School, as the case may be.

6. Personal information, as defined in § 2.2-3801, provided to the Board of the Commonwealth Savers Plan or its employees by or on behalf of individuals who have requested information about, applied for, or entered into prepaid tuition contracts or savings trust account agreements pursuant to Chapter 7 (§ 23.1-700 et seq.) of Title 23.1, including personal information related to (i) qualified beneficiaries as that term is defined in § 23.1-700, (ii) designated survivors, or (iii) authorized individuals. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prevent disclosure or publication of information in a statistical or other form that does not identify individuals or provide personal information. Individuals shall be provided access to their own personal information.

   For purposes of this subdivision:

   "Authorized individual" means an individual who may be named by the account owner to receive information regarding the account but who does not have any control or authority over the account.

   "Designated survivor" means the person who will assume account ownership in the event of the account owner's death.

7. Information maintained in connection with fundraising activities by or for a public institution of higher education that would reveal (i) personal fundraising strategies relating to identifiable donors or prospective donors or (ii) wealth assessments; estate, financial, or tax planning information; health-related information; employment, familial, or marital status information; electronic mail addresses, facsimile or telephone numbers; birth dates or social security numbers of identifiable donors or prospective donors. The exclusion provided by this subdivision shall not apply to protect from disclosure (a) information relating to the amount, date, purpose, and terms of the pledge or donation or the identity of the donor or (b) the identities of sponsors providing grants to or contracting with the institution for the performance of research services or other work or the terms and conditions of such grants or contracts. For purposes of clause (a), the identity of the donor may be withheld if (1) the donor has requested anonymity in connection with or as a condition of making a pledge or donation and (2) the pledge or donation does not impose terms or conditions directing academic decision-making.

8. Information held by a threat assessment team established by a local school board pursuant to § 22.1-79.4 or by a public institution of higher education pursuant to § 23.1-805 relating to the assessment or intervention with a specific individual. However, in the event an individual who has been under assessment commits an act, or is prosecuted for the commission of an act that has caused the death of, or caused serious bodily injury, including any felony sexual assault, to another person, such information of the threat assessment team concerning the individual under assessment shall be made available as provided by this chapter, with the exception of any criminal history records obtained pursuant to § § 19.2-389 or § 19.2-389.1, health records obtained pursuant to § 32.1-127.1:03, or scholastic records as defined in § 22.1-289. The public body providing such information shall remove personally identifying information of any person who provided information to the threat assessment team under a promise of confidentiality.

9. Records provided to the Governor or the designated reviewers by a qualified institution, as those terms are defined in § 23.1-1239, related to a proposed memorandum of understanding, or proposed amendments to a memorandum of understanding, submitted pursuant to Chapter 12.1 (§ 23.1-1239 et seq.) of Title 23.1. A memorandum of understanding entered into pursuant to such chapter shall be subject to public disclosure after it is agreed to and signed by the Governor.

B. The custodian of a scholastic record shall not

release the address, phone number, or email address of a student in response to a request made under this chapter without written consent. For any student who is (i) 18 years of age or older, (ii) under the age of 18 and emancipated, or (iii) attending an institution of higher education, written consent of the student shall be required. For any other student, written consent of the parent or legal guardian of such student shall be required.

## § 2.2-3705.5. Exclusions to application of chapter; health and social services records.

The following information contained in a public record is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law. Redaction of information excluded under this section from a public record shall be conducted in accordance with § 2.2-3704.01.

1. Health records, except that such records may be personally reviewed by the individual who is the subject of such records, as provided in subsection F of § 32.1-127.1:03.

Where the person who is the subject of health records is confined in a state or local correctional facility, the administrator or chief medical officer of such facility may assert such confined person's right of access to the health records if the administrator or chief medical officer has reasonable cause to believe that such confined person has an infectious disease or other medical condition from which other persons so confined need to be protected. Health records shall only be reviewed and shall not be copied by such administrator or chief medical officer. The information in the health records of a person so confined shall continue to be confidential and shall not be disclosed by the administrator or chief medical officer of the facility to any person except the subject or except as provided by law.

Where the person who is the subject of health records is under the age of 18, his right of access may be asserted only by his guardian or his parent, including a noncustodial parent, unless such parent's parental rights have been terminated, a court of competent jurisdiction has restricted or denied such access, or a parent has been denied access to the health record in accordance with § 20-124.6. In instances where the person who is the subject thereof is an emancipated minor, a student in a public institution of higher education, or is a minor who has consented to his own treatment as authorized by §§ 16.1-338 or 54.1-2969, the right of access may be asserted by the subject person.

For the purposes of this chapter, statistical summaries of incidents and statistical data concerning abuse of individuals receiving services compiled by the Commissioner of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services shall be disclosed. No such summaries or data shall include any information that identifies specific individuals receiving services.

2. Applications for admission to examinations or for licensure and scoring records maintained by the Department of Health Professions or any board in that department on individual licensees or applicants; information required to be provided to the Department of Health Professions by certain licensees pursuant to § 54.1-2506.1; information held by the Health Practitioners' Monitoring Program Committee within the Department of Health Professions that identifies any practitioner who may be, or who is actually, impaired to the extent that disclosure is prohibited by § 54.1-2517; and information relating to the prescribing and dispensing of covered substances to recipients and any abstracts from such information that are in the possession of the Prescription Monitoring Program (Program) pursuant to Chapter 25.2 (§ 54.1-2519 et seq.) of Title 54.1 and any material relating to the operation or security of the Program.

3. Reports, documentary evidence, and other information as specified in §§ 51.5-122 and 51.5-184 and Chapter 1 (§ 63.2-100 et seq.) of Title 63.2 and information and statistical registries required to be kept confidential pursuant to Chapter 1 (§ 63.2-100 et seq.) of Title 63.2.

4. Investigative notes; proprietary information not published, copyrighted or patented; information obtained from employee personnel records; personally identifiable information regarding residents, clients or other recipients of services; other correspondence and information furnished in confidence to the Department of Education in connection with an active investigation of an applicant or licensee pursuant to Chapter 14.1 (§ 22.1-289.02 et seq.) of Title 22.1; other correspondence and information furnished in confidence to the Department of Social Services in connection with an active investigation of an applicant or licensee pursuant to Chapters 17 (§ 63.2-1700 et seq.) and 18 (§ 63.2-1800 et seq.) of Title 63.2; and information furnished to the Office of the Attorney General in connection with an investigation or litigation pursuant to Article 19.1 (§ 8.01-216.1 et seq.) of Chapter 3 of Title 8.01 and Chapter 9 (§ 32.1-310 et seq.) of Title 32.1. However, nothing in this subdivision shall prevent the disclosure of information from the records of completed investi-

gations in a form that does not reveal the identity of complainants, persons supplying information, or other individuals involved in the investigation.

5. Information collected for the designation and verification of trauma centers and other specialty care centers within the Statewide Emergency Medical Services System and Services pursuant to Article 2.1 (§ 32.1-111.1 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 32.1.

6. Reports and court documents relating to involuntary admission required to be kept confidential pursuant to § 37.2-818.

7. Information acquired (i) during a review of any child death conducted by the State Child Fatality Review Team established pursuant to § 32.1-283.1 or by a local or regional child fatality review team to the extent that such information is made confidential by § 32.1-283.2; (ii) during a review of any death conducted by a family violence fatality review team to the extent that such information is made confidential by § 32.1-283.3; (iii) during a review of any adult death conducted by the Adult Fatality Review Team to the extent made confidential by § 32.1-283.5 or by a local or regional adult fatality review team to the extent that such information is made confidential by § 32.1-283.6; (iv) by a local or regional overdose fatality review team to the extent that such information is made confidential by § 32.1-283.7; (v) during a review of any death conducted by the Maternal Mortality Review Team to the extent that such information is made confidential by § 32.1-283.8; or (vi) during a review of any death conducted by the Developmental Disabilities Mortality Review Committee to the extent that such information is made confidential by § 37.2-314.1.

8. Patient level data collected by the Board of Health and not yet processed, verified, and released, pursuant to § 32.1-276.9, to the Board by the nonprofit organization with which the Commissioner of Health has contracted pursuant to § 32.1-276.4.

9. Information relating to a grant application, or accompanying a grant application, submitted to the Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative Advisory Board pursuant to Article 12 (§ 51.5-178 et seq.) of Chapter 14 of Title 51.5 that would (i) reveal (a) medical or mental health records or other data identifying individual patients or (b) proprietary business or research-related information produced or collected by the applicant in the conduct of or as a result of study or research on medical, rehabilitative, scientific, technical, or scholarly issues, when such information has not been publicly released, published, copyrighted, or patented, and (ii) be harmful to the competitive position of the applicant.

10. Any information copied, recorded, or received by the Commissioner of Health in the course of an examination, investigation, or review of a managed care health insurance plan licensee pursuant to §§ 32.1-137.4 and 32.1-137.5, including books, records, files, accounts, papers, documents, and any or all computer or other recordings.

11. Records of the Virginia Birth-Related Neurological Injury Compensation Program required to be kept confidential pursuant to § 38.2-5002.2.

12. Information held by the State Health Commissioner relating to the health of any person subject to an order of quarantine or an order of isolation pursuant to Article 3.02 (§ 32.1-48.05 et seq.) of Chapter 2 of Title 32.1. However, nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prevent the disclosure of statistical summaries, abstracts, or other information in aggregate form.

13. The names and addresses or other contact information of persons receiving transportation services from a state or local public body or its designee under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, (42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq.) or funded by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) created under § 63.2-600.

14. Information held by certain health care committees and entities that may be withheld from discovery as privileged communications pursuant to § 8.01-581.17.

15. Data and information specified in § 37.2-308.01 relating to proceedings provided for in Article 16 (§ 16.1-335 et seq.) of Chapter 11 of Title 16.1 and Chapter 8 (§ 37.2-800 et seq.) of Title 37.2.

16. Records of and information held by the Emergency Department Care Coordination Program required to be kept confidential pursuant to § 32.1-372.

### § 2.2-3705.6. Exclusions to application of chapter; proprietary records and trade secrets.

The following information contained in a public record is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law. Redaction of information excluded under this section from a public record shall be conducted in accordance with § 2.2-3704.01.

1. Proprietary information gathered by or for the Virginia Port Authority as provided in § 62.1-132.4 or § 62.1-134.1.

2. Financial statements not publicly available filed with applications for industrial development financings

in accordance with Chapter 49 (§ 15.2-4900 et seq.) of Title 15.2.

3. Proprietary information, voluntarily provided by private business pursuant to a promise of confidentiality from a public body, used by the public body for business, trade, and tourism development or retention; and memoranda, working papers, or other information related to businesses that are considering locating or expanding in Virginia, prepared by a public body, where competition or bargaining is involved and where disclosure of such information would adversely affect the financial interest of the public body.

4. Information that was filed as confidential under the Toxic Substances Information Act (§ 32.1-239 et seq.), as such Act existed prior to July 1, 1992.

5. Fisheries data that would permit identification of any person or vessel, except when required by court order as specified in § 28.2-204.

6. Confidential financial statements, balance sheets, trade secrets, and revenue and cost projections provided to the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, provided such information is exempt under the federal Freedom of Information Act or the federal Interstate Commerce Act or other laws administered by the Surface Transportation Board or the Federal Railroad Administration with respect to data provided in confidence to the Surface Transportation Board and the Federal Railroad Administration.

7. Proprietary information related to inventory and sales, voluntarily provided by private energy suppliers to the Department of Energy, used by that Department for energy contingency planning purposes or for developing consolidated statistical information on energy supplies.

8. Confidential proprietary information furnished to the Board of Medical Assistance Services or the Medicaid Prior Authorization Advisory Committee pursuant to Article 4 (§ 32.1-331.12 et seq.) of Chapter 10 of Title 32.1.

9. Proprietary, commercial or financial information, balance sheets, trade secrets, and revenue and cost projections provided by a private transportation business to the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation for the purpose of conducting transportation studies needed to obtain grants or other financial assistance under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (P.L. 105-178) for transportation projects if disclosure of such information is exempt under the federal Freedom of Information Act or the federal Interstate Commerce Act or other laws administered by the Surface Transportation Board or the Federal Railroad Administration with respect to data provided in confidence to the Surface Transportation Board and the Federal Railroad Administration. However, the exclusion provided by this subdivision shall not apply to any wholly owned subsidiary of a public body.

10. Confidential information designated as provided in subsection F of § 2.2-4342 as trade secrets or proprietary information by any person in connection with a procurement transaction or by any person who has submitted to a public body an application for prequalification to bid on public construction projects in accordance with subsection B of § 2.2-4317.

11. a. Memoranda, staff evaluations, or other information prepared by the responsible public entity, its staff, outside advisors, or consultants exclusively for the evaluation and negotiation of proposals filed under the Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995 (§ 33.2-1800 et seq.) or the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002 (§ 56-575.1 et seq.) where (i) if such information was made public prior to or after the execution of an interim or a comprehensive agreement, § 33.2-1820 or § 56-575.17 notwithstanding, the financial interest or bargaining position of the public entity would be adversely affected and (ii) the basis for the determination required in clause (i) is documented in writing by the responsible public entity; and

b. Information provided by a private entity to a responsible public entity, affected jurisdiction, or affected local jurisdiction pursuant to the provisions of the Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995 (§ 33.2-1800 et seq.) or the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002 (§ 56-575.1 et seq.) if disclosure of such information would reveal (i) trade secrets of the private entity; (ii) financial information of the private entity, including balance sheets and financial statements, that are not generally available to the public through regulatory disclosure or otherwise; or (iii) other information submitted by the private entity where if such information was made public prior to the execution of an interim agreement or a comprehensive agreement, the financial interest or bargaining position of the public or private entity would be adversely affected. In order for the information specified in clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the private entity shall make a written request to the responsible public entity:

(1) Invoking such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought;

(2) Identifying with specificity the data or other materials for which protection is sought; and

(3) Stating the reasons why protection is necessary.

The responsible public entity shall determine whether the requested exclusion from disclosure is necessary to protect the trade secrets or financial information of the private entity. To protect other information submitted by the private entity from disclosure, the responsible public entity shall determine whether public disclosure prior to the execution of an interim agreement or a comprehensive agreement would adversely affect the financial interest or bargaining position of the public or private entity. The responsible public entity shall make a written determination of the nature and scope of the protection to be afforded by the responsible public entity under this subdivision. Once a written determination is made by the responsible public entity, the information afforded protection under this subdivision shall continue to be protected from disclosure when in the possession of any affected jurisdiction or affected local jurisdiction.

Except as specifically provided in subdivision 11 a, nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to authorize the withholding of (a) procurement records as required by §§ 33.2-1820 or 56-575.17; (b) information concerning the terms and conditions of any interim or comprehensive agreement, service contract, lease, partnership, or any agreement of any kind entered into by the responsible public entity and the private entity; (c) information concerning the terms and conditions of any financing arrangement that involves the use of any public funds; or (d) information concerning the performance of any private entity developing or operating a qualifying transportation facility or a qualifying project.

For the purposes of this subdivision, the terms "affected jurisdiction," "affected local jurisdiction," "comprehensive agreement," "interim agreement," "qualifying project," "qualifying transportation facility," "responsible public entity," and "private entity" shall mean the same as those terms are defined in the Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995 (§ 33.2-1800 et seq.) or in the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002 (§ 56-575.1 et seq.).

12. Confidential proprietary information or trade secrets, not publicly available, provided by a private person or entity pursuant to a promise of confidentiality to the Virginia Resources Authority or to a fund administered in connection with financial assistance rendered or to be rendered by the Virginia Resources Authority where, if such information were made public, the financial interest of the private person or entity would be adversely affected.

13. Trade secrets or confidential proprietary information that is not generally available to the public through regulatory disclosure or otherwise, provided by a (i) bidder or applicant for a franchise or (ii) franchisee under Chapter 21 (§ 15.2-2100 et seq.) of Title 15.2 to the applicable franchising authority pursuant to a promise of confidentiality from the franchising authority, to the extent the information relates to the bidder's, applicant's, or franchisee's financial capacity or provision of new services, adoption of new technologies or implementation of improvements, where such new services, technologies, or improvements have not been implemented by the franchisee on a nonexperimental scale in the franchise area, and where, if such information were made public, the competitive advantage or financial interests of the franchisee would be adversely affected.

In order for trade secrets or confidential proprietary information to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the bidder, applicant, or franchisee shall (a) invoke such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought, (b) identify the data or other materials for which protection is sought, and (c) state the reason why protection is necessary.

No bidder, applicant, or franchisee may invoke the exclusion provided by this subdivision if the bidder, applicant, or franchisee is owned or controlled by a public body or if any representative of the applicable franchising authority serves on the management board or as an officer of the bidder, applicant, or franchisee.

14. Information of a proprietary or confidential nature furnished by a supplier or manufacturer of charitable gaming supplies to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (i) pursuant to subsection E of § 18.2-340.34 and (ii) pursuant to regulations promulgated by the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services related to approval of electronic and mechanical equipment.

15. Information related to Virginia apple producer sales provided to the Virginia State Apple Board pursuant to § 3.2-1215.

16. Trade secrets submitted by CMRS providers as defined in § 56-484.12 to the former Wireless Carrier E-911 Cost Recovery Subcommittee created pursuant to former § 56-484.15, relating to the provision of wireless E-911 service.

17. Information relating to a grant or loan application, or accompanying a grant or loan application, to the Commonwealth Health Research Board pursuant to Chapter 5.3 (§ 32.1-162.23 et seq.) of Title 32.1 if disclosure of such information would (i) reveal proprie-

tary business or research-related information produced or collected by the applicant in the conduct of or as a result of study or research on medical, rehabilitative, scientific, technical, technological, or scholarly issues, when such information has not been publicly released, published, copyrighted, or patented, and (ii) be harmful to the competitive position of the applicant.

18. Confidential proprietary information and trade secrets developed and held by a local public body (i) providing telecommunication services pursuant to § 56-265.4:4 and (ii) providing cable television services pursuant to Article 1.1 (§ 15.2-2108.2 et seq.) of Chapter 21 of Title 15.2 if disclosure of such information would be harmful to the competitive position of the locality.

In order for confidential proprietary information or trade secrets to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the locality in writing shall (a) invoke the protections of this subdivision, (b) identify with specificity the information for which protection is sought, and (c) state the reasons why protection is necessary. However, the exemption provided by this subdivision shall not apply to any authority created pursuant to the BVU Authority Act (§ 15.2-7200 et seq.).

19. Confidential proprietary information and trade secrets developed by or for a local authority created in accordance with the Virginia Wireless Service Authorities Act (§ 15.2-5431.1 et seq.) to provide qualifying communications services as authorized by Article 5.1 (§ 56-484.7:1 et seq.) of Chapter 15 of Title 56, where disclosure of such information would be harmful to the competitive position of the authority, except that information required to be maintained in accordance with § 15.2-2160 shall be released.

20. Trade secrets or financial information of a business, including balance sheets and financial statements, that are not generally available to the public through regulatory disclosure or otherwise, provided to the Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity as part of an application for certification as a small, women-owned, or minority-owned business in accordance with Chapter 16.1 (§ 2.2-1603 et seq.). In order for such trade secrets or financial information to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the business shall (i) invoke such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought, (ii) identify the data or other materials for which protection is sought, and (iii) state the reasons why protection is necessary.

21. Information of a proprietary or confidential nature disclosed by a carrier to the State Health Commissioner pursuant to §§ 32.1-276.5:1 and 32.1-276.7:1.

22. Trade secrets, including, but not limited to, financial information, including balance sheets and financial statements, that are not generally available to the public through regulatory disclosure or otherwise, and revenue and cost projections supplied by a private or nongovernmental entity to the State Inspector General for the purpose of an audit, special investigation, or any study requested by the Office of the State Inspector General in accordance with law.

In order for the information specified in this subdivision to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the private or nongovernmental entity shall make a written request to the State Inspector General:

a. Invoking such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought;

b. Identifying with specificity the data or other materials for which protection is sought; and

c. Stating the reasons why protection is necessary.

The State Inspector General shall determine whether the requested exclusion from disclosure is necessary to protect the trade secrets or financial information of the private entity. The State Inspector General shall make a written determination of the nature and scope of the protection to be afforded by it under this subdivision.

23. Information relating to a grant application, or accompanying a grant application, submitted to the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission that would (i) reveal (a) trade secrets, (b) financial information of a grant applicant that is not a public body, including balance sheets and financial statements, that are not generally available to the public through regulatory disclosure or otherwise, or (c) research-related information produced or collected by the applicant in the conduct of or as a result of study or research on medical, rehabilitative, scientific, technical, technological, or scholarly issues, when such information has not been publicly released, published, copyrighted, or patented, and (ii) be harmful to the competitive position of the applicant; and memoranda, staff evaluations, or other information prepared by the Commission or its staff exclusively for the evaluation of grant applications. The exclusion provided by this subdivision shall apply to grants that are consistent with the powers of and in furtherance of the performance of the duties of the Commission pursuant to § 3.2-3103.

In order for the information specified in this subdivision to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the applicant shall make a written request to the Commission:

a. Invoking such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought;

b. Identifying with specificity the data, information or other materials for which protection is sought; and

c. Stating the reasons why protection is necessary.

The Commission shall determine whether the requested exclusion from disclosure is necessary to protect the trade secrets, financial information, or research-related information of the applicant. The Commission shall make a written determination of the nature and scope of the protection to be afforded by it under this subdivision.

24. a. Information held by the Commercial Space Flight Authority relating to rate structures or charges for the use of projects of, the sale of products of, or services rendered by the Authority if disclosure of such information would adversely affect the financial interest or bargaining position of the Authority or a private entity providing the information to the Authority; or

b. Information provided by a private entity to the Commercial Space Flight Authority if disclosure of such information would (i) reveal (a) trade secrets of the private entity; (b) financial information of the private entity, including balance sheets and financial statements, that are not generally available to the public through regulatory disclosure or otherwise; or (c) other information submitted by the private entity and (ii) adversely affect the financial interest or bargaining position of the Authority or private entity.

In order for the information specified in clauses (a), (b), and (c) of subdivision 24 b to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the private entity shall make a written request to the Authority:

(1) Invoking such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought;

(2) Identifying with specificity the data or other materials for which protection is sought; and

(3) Stating the reasons why protection is necessary.

The Authority shall determine whether the requested exclusion from disclosure is necessary to protect the trade secrets or financial information of the private entity. To protect other information submitted by the private entity from disclosure, the Authority shall determine whether public disclosure would adversely affect the financial interest or bargaining position of the Authority or private entity. The Authority shall make a written determination of the nature and scope of the protection to be afforded by it under this subdivision.

25. Information of a proprietary nature furnished by an agricultural landowner or operator to the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, or any political subdivision, agency, or board of the Commonwealth pursuant to §§ 10.1-104.7, § 10.1-104.8, and § 10.1-104.9, other than when required as part of a state or federal regulatory enforcement action.

26. Trade secrets provided to the Department of Environmental Quality pursuant to the provisions of § 10.1-1458. In order for such trade secrets to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the submitting party shall (i) invoke this exclusion upon submission of the data or materials for which protection from disclosure is sought, (ii) identify the data or materials for which protection is sought, and (iii) state the reasons why protection is necessary.

27. Information of a proprietary nature furnished by a licensed public-use airport to the Department of Aviation for funding from programs administered by the Department of Aviation or the Virginia Aviation Board, where if such information was made public, the financial interest of the public-use airport would be adversely affected.

In order for the information specified in this subdivision to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the public-use airport shall make a written request to the Department of Aviation:

a. Invoking such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought;

b. Identifying with specificity the data or other materials for which protection is sought; and

c. Stating the reasons why protection is necessary.

28. Information relating to a grant, loan, or investment application, or accompanying a grant, loan, or investment application, submitted to the Commonwealth of Virginia Innovation Partnership Authority (the Authority) established pursuant to Article 11 (§ 2.2-2351 et seq.) of Chapter 22, an advisory committee of the Authority, or any other entity designated by the Authority to review such applications, to the extent that such records would (i) reveal (a) trade secrets; (b) financial information of a party to a grant, loan, or investment application that is not a public body, including balance sheets and financial statements, that are not generally available to the public through regulatory disclosure or otherwise; or (c) research-related information produced or collected by a party to the application

in the conduct of or as a result of study or research on medical, rehabilitative, scientific, technical, technological, or scholarly issues, when such information has not been publicly released, published, copyrighted, or patented, and (ii) be harmful to the competitive position of a party to a grant, loan, or investment application; and memoranda, staff evaluations, or other information prepared by the Authority or its staff, or a reviewing entity designated by the Authority, exclusively for the evaluation of grant, loan, or investment applications, including any scoring or prioritization documents prepared for and forwarded to the Authority.

29. Proprietary information, voluntarily provided by a private business pursuant to a promise of confidentiality from a public body, used by the public body for a solar services or carbon sequestration agreement, where disclosure of such information would (i) reveal (a) trade secrets of the private business; (b) financial information of the private business, including balance sheets and financial statements, that are not generally available to the public through regulatory disclosure or otherwise; or (c) other information submitted by the private business and (ii) adversely affect the financial interest or bargaining position of the public body or private business.

In order for the information specified in clauses (i) (a), (b), and (c) to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the private business shall make a written request to the public body:

a. Invoking such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought;

b. Identifying with specificity the data or other materials for which protection is sought; and

c. Stating the reasons why protection is necessary.

30. Information contained in engineering and construction drawings and plans submitted for the sole purpose of complying with the Building Code in obtaining a building permit if disclosure of such information would identify specific trade secrets or other information that would be harmful to the competitive position of the owner or lessee. However, such information shall be exempt only until the building is completed. Information relating to the safety or environmental soundness of any building shall not be exempt from disclosure.

31. Trade secrets, including, but not limited to, financial information, including balance sheets and financial statements that are not generally available to the public through regulatory disclosure or otherwise, and revenue and cost projections supplied by a private or nongovernmental entity to the Virginia Department of Transportation for the purpose of an audit, special investigation, or any study requested by the Virginia Department of Transportation in accordance with law.

In order for the records specified in this subdivision to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the private or nongovernmental entity shall make a written request to the Department:

a. Invoking such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought;

b. Identifying with specificity the data or other materials for which protection is sought; and

c. Stating the reasons why protection is necessary.

The Virginia Department of Transportation shall determine whether the requested exclusion from disclosure is necessary to protect trade secrets or financial records of the private entity. The Virginia Department of Transportation shall make a written determination of the nature and scope of the protection to be afforded by it under this subdivision.

32. Information related to a grant application, or accompanying a grant application, submitted to the Department of Housing and Community Development that would (i) reveal (a) trade secrets, (b) financial information of a grant applicant that is not a public body, including balance sheets and financial statements, that are not generally available to the public through regulatory disclosure or otherwise, or (c) research-related information produced or collected by the applicant in the conduct of or as a result of study or research on medical, rehabilitative, scientific, technical, technological, or scholarly issues, when such information has not been publicly released, published, copyrighted, or patented, and (ii) be harmful to the competitive position of the applicant. The exclusion provided by this subdivision shall only apply to grants administered by the Department, the Director of the Department, or pursuant to § 36-139, Article 26 (§ 2.2-2484 et seq.) of Chapter 24, or the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative as authorized by the appropriations act.

In order for the information submitted by the applicant and specified in this subdivision to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the applicant shall make a written request to the Department:

a. Invoking such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought;

b. Identifying with specificity the data, information, or other materials for which protection is sought; and

c. Stating the reasons why protection is necessary.

The Department shall determine whether the requested exclusion from disclosure is necessary to protect the trade secrets or confidential proprietary information of the applicant. The Department shall make a written determination of the nature and scope of the protection to be afforded by it under this subdivision.

33. Financial and proprietary records submitted with a loan application to a locality for the preservation or construction of affordable housing that is related to a competitive application to be submitted to either the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA), when the release of such records would adversely affect the bargaining or competitive position of the applicant. Such records shall not be withheld after they have been made public by HUD or VHDA.

34. Information of a proprietary or confidential nature disclosed by a health carrier or pharmacy benefits manager pursuant to § 38.2-3407.15:6, a wholesale distributor pursuant to § 54.1-3436.1, or a manufacturer pursuant to § 54.1-3442.02.

### § 2.2-3705.7. Exclusions to application of chapter; records of specific public bodies and certain other limited exclusions.

The following information contained in a public record is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law. Redaction of information excluded under this section from a public record shall be conducted in accordance with § 2.2-3704.01.

1. State income, business, and estate tax returns, personal property tax returns, and confidential records held pursuant to § 58.1-3.

2. Working papers and correspondence of the Office of the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, or the Attorney General; the members of the General Assembly, the Division of Legislative Services, or the Clerks of the House of Delegates or the Senate of Virginia; the mayor or chief executive officer of any political subdivision of the Commonwealth; or the president or other chief executive officer of any public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth. However, no information that is otherwise open to inspection under this chapter shall be deemed excluded by virtue of the fact that it has been attached to or incorporated within any working paper or correspondence. Further, information publicly available or not otherwise subject to an exclusion under this chapter or other provision of law that has been aggregated, combined, or changed in format without substantive analysis or revision shall not be deemed working papers. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to authorize the withholding of any resumes or applications submitted by persons who are appointed by the Governor pursuant to §§ 2.2-106 or § 2.2-107.

As used in this subdivision:

"Members of the General Assembly" means each member of the Senate of Virginia and the House of Delegates and their legislative aides when working on behalf of such member.

"Office of the Governor" means the Governor; the Governor's chief of staff, counsel, director of policy, and Cabinet Secretaries; the Assistant to the Governor for Intergovernmental Affairs; and those individuals to whom the Governor has delegated his authority pursuant to § 2.2-104.

"Working papers" means those records prepared by or for a public official identified in this subdivision for his personal or deliberative use.

3. Information contained in library records that can be used to identify (i) both (a) any library patron who has borrowed or accessed material or resources from a library and (b) the material or resources such patron borrowed or accessed or (ii) any library patron under 18 years of age. For the purposes of clause (ii), access shall not be denied to the parent, including a noncustodial parent, or guardian of such library patron.

4. Contract cost estimates prepared for the confidential use of the Department of Transportation in awarding contracts for construction or the purchase of goods or services, and records and automated systems prepared for the Department's Bid Analysis and Monitoring Program.

5. Lists of registered owners of bonds issued by a political subdivision of the Commonwealth, whether the lists are maintained by the political subdivision itself or by a single fiduciary designated by the political subdivision.

6. Information furnished by a member of the General Assembly to a meeting of a standing committee, special committee, or subcommittee of his house established solely for the purpose of reviewing members' annual disclosure statements and supporting materials filed under § 30-110 or of formulating advisory opinions to members on standards of conduct, or both.

7. Customer account information of a public utility affiliated with a political subdivision of the Commonwealth, including the customer's name and service address, but excluding the amount of utility service

provided and the amount of money charged or paid for such utility service.

8. Personal information, as defined in § 2.2-3801, (i) filed with the Virginia Housing Development Authority concerning individuals who have applied for or received loans or other housing assistance or who have applied for occupancy of or have occupied housing financed, owned or otherwise assisted by the Virginia Housing Development Authority; (ii) concerning persons participating in or persons on the waiting list for federally funded rent-assistance programs; (iii) filed with any local redevelopment and housing authority created pursuant to § 36-4 concerning persons participating in or persons on the waiting list for housing assistance programs funded by local governments or by any such authority; or (iv) filed with any local redevelopment and housing authority created pursuant to § 36-4 or any other local government agency concerning persons who have applied for occupancy or who have occupied affordable dwelling units established pursuant to §§ 15.2-2304 or 15.2-2305. However, access to one's own information shall not be denied.

9. Information regarding the siting of hazardous waste facilities, except as provided in § 10.1-1441, if disclosure of such information would have a detrimental effect upon the negotiating position of a governing body or on the establishment of the terms, conditions, and provisions of the siting agreement.

10. Information on the site-specific location of rare, threatened, endangered, or otherwise imperiled plant and animal species, natural communities, caves, and significant historic and archaeological sites if, in the opinion of the public body that has the responsibility for such information, disclosure of the information would jeopardize the continued existence or the integrity of the resource. This exclusion shall not apply to requests from the owner of the land upon which the resource is located.

11. Memoranda, graphics, video or audio tapes, production models, data, and information of a proprietary nature produced by or for or collected by or for the Virginia Lottery relating to matters of a specific lottery game design, development, production, operation, ticket price, prize structure, manner of selecting the winning ticket, manner of payment of prizes to holders of winning tickets, frequency of drawings or selections of winning tickets, odds of winning, advertising, or marketing, where such information not been publicly released, published, copyrighted, or patented. Whether released, published, or copyrighted, all game-related information shall be subject to public disclosure under this chapter upon the first day of sales for the specific lottery game to which it pertains.

12. Information held by the Virginia Retirement System, acting pursuant to § 51.1-124.30, or a local retirement system, acting pursuant to § 51.1-803, or by a local finance board or board of trustees of a trust established by one or more local public bodies to invest funds for post-retirement benefits other than pensions, acting pursuant to Article 8 (§ 15.2-1544 et seq.) of Chapter 15 of Title 15.2, or by the board of visitors of the University of Virginia, acting pursuant to § 23.1-2210, or by the board of visitors of The College of William and Mary in Virginia, acting pursuant to § 23.1-2803, or by the Commonwealth Savers Plan, acting pursuant to § 23.1-704, relating to the acquisition, holding, or disposition of a security or other ownership interest in an entity, where such security or ownership interest is not traded on a governmentally regulated securities exchange, if disclosure of such information would (i) reveal confidential analyses prepared for the board of visitors of the University of Virginia, prepared for the board of visitors of The College of William and Mary in Virginia, prepared by the retirement system, a local finance board or board of trustees, or the Commonwealth Savers Plan, or provided to the retirement system, a local finance board or board of trustees, or the Commonwealth Savers Plan under a promise of confidentiality of the future value of such ownership interest or the future financial performance of the entity and (ii) have an adverse effect on the value of the investment to be acquired, held, or disposed of by the retirement system, a local finance board or board of trustees, the board of visitors of the University of Virginia, the board of visitors of The College of William and Mary in Virginia, or the Commonwealth Savers Plan. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prevent the disclosure of information relating to the identity of any investment held, the amount invested, or the present value of such investment.

13. Financial, medical, rehabilitative, and other personal information concerning applicants for or recipients of loan funds submitted to or maintained by the Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority under Chapter 11 (§ 51.5-53 et seq.) of Title 51.5.

14. Information held by the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System Authority pertaining to any of the following: an individual's qualifications for or continued membership on its medical or teaching staffs; proprietary information gathered by or in the possession of the Authority from third parties pursuant to a promise of confidentiality; contract cost estimates

prepared for confidential use in awarding contracts for construction or the purchase of goods or services; information of a proprietary nature produced or collected by or for the Authority or members of its medical or teaching staffs; financial statements not publicly available that may be filed with the Authority from third parties; the identity, accounts, or account status of any customer of the Authority; consulting or other reports paid for by the Authority to assist the Authority in connection with its strategic planning and goals; the determination of marketing and operational strategies where disclosure of such strategies would be harmful to the competitive position of the Authority; and information of a proprietary nature produced or collected by or for employees of the Authority, other than the Authority's financial or administrative records, in the conduct of or as a result of study or research on medical, scientific, technical, or scholarly issues, whether sponsored by the Authority alone or in conjunction with a governmental body or a private concern, when such information has not been publicly released, published, copyrighted, or patented. This exclusion shall also apply when such information is in the possession of Virginia Commonwealth University.

15. Information held by the Department of Environmental Quality, the State Water Control Board, the State Air Pollution Control Board, or the Virginia Waste Management Board relating to (i) active federal environmental enforcement actions that are considered confidential under federal law and (ii) enforcement strategies, including proposed sanctions for enforcement actions. Upon request, such information shall be disclosed after a proposed sanction resulting from the investigation has been proposed to the director of the agency. This subdivision shall not be construed to prevent the disclosure of information related to inspection reports, notices of violation, and documents detailing the nature of any environmental contamination that may have occurred or similar documents.

16. Information related to the operation of toll facilities that identifies an individual, vehicle, or travel itinerary, including vehicle identification data or vehicle enforcement system information; video or photographic images; Social Security or other identification numbers appearing on driver's licenses; credit card or bank account data; home addresses; phone numbers; or records of the date or time of toll facility use.

17. Information held by the Virginia Lottery pertaining to (i) the social security number, tax identification number, state sales tax number, home address and telephone number, personal and lottery banking account and transit numbers of a retailer, and financial information regarding the nonlottery operations of specific retail locations and (ii) individual lottery winners, except that a winner's name, hometown, and amount won shall be disclosed. If the value of the prize won by the winner exceeds $10 million, the information described in clause (ii) shall not be disclosed unless the winner consents in writing to such disclosure.

18. Information held by the Board for Branch Pilots relating to the chemical or drug testing of a person regulated by the Board, where such person has tested negative or has not been the subject of a disciplinary action by the Board for a positive test result.

19. Information pertaining to the planning, scheduling, and performance of examinations of holder records pursuant to the Virginia Disposition of Unclaimed Property Act (§ 55.1-2500 et seq.) prepared by or for the State Treasurer or his agents or employees or persons employed to perform an audit or examination of holder records.

20. Information held by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management or a local governing body relating to citizen emergency response teams established pursuant to an ordinance of a local governing body that reveal the name, address, including e-mail address, telephone or pager numbers, or operating schedule of an individual participant in the program.

21. Information held by state or local park and recreation departments and local and regional park authorities concerning identifiable individuals under the age of 18 years. However, nothing in this subdivision shall operate to prevent the disclosure of information defined as directory information under regulations implementing the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, unless the public body has undertaken the parental notification and opt-out requirements provided by such regulations. Access shall not be denied to the parent, including a noncustodial parent, or guardian of such person, unless the parent's parental rights have been terminated or a court of competent jurisdiction has restricted or denied such access. For such information of persons who are emancipated, the right of access may be asserted by the subject thereof. Any parent or emancipated person who is the subject of the information may waive, in writing, the protections afforded by this subdivision. If the protections are so waived, the public body shall open such information for inspection and copying.

22. Information submitted for inclusion in the Statewide Alert Network administered by the Department of Emergency Management that reveal names, physical addresses, email addresses, computer or internet protocol information, telephone numbers, pager

numbers, other wireless or portable communications device information, or operating schedules of individuals or agencies, where the release of such information would compromise the security of the Statewide Alert Network or individuals participating in the Statewide Alert Network.

23. Information held by the Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission made confidential by § 17.1-913.

24. Information held by the Virginia Retirement System acting pursuant to § 51.1-124.30, a local retirement system acting pursuant to § 51.1-803 (hereinafter collectively referred to as the retirement system), or the Commonwealth Savers Plan, acting pursuant to § 23.1-704 relating to:

a. Internal deliberations of or decisions by the retirement system or the Commonwealth Savers Plan on the pursuit of particular investment strategies, or the selection or termination of investment managers, prior to the execution of such investment strategies or the selection or termination of such managers, if disclosure of such information would have an adverse impact on the financial interest of the retirement system or the Commonwealth Savers Plan; and

b. Trade secrets provided by a private entity to the retirement system or the Commonwealth Savers if disclosure of such records would have an adverse impact on the financial interest of the retirement system or the Commonwealth Savers Plan.

For the records specified in subdivision b to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the entity shall make a written request to the retirement system or the Commonwealth Savers Plan:

(1) Invoking such exclusion prior to or upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought;

(2) Identifying with specificity the data or other materials for which protection is sought; and

(3) Stating the reasons why protection is necessary.

The retirement system or the Commonwealth Savers Plan shall determine whether the requested exclusion from disclosure meets the requirements set forth in subdivision b.

Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prevent the disclosure of the identity or amount of any investment held or the present value and performance of all asset classes and subclasses.

25. Information held by the Department of Corrections made confidential by former § 53.1-233.

26. Information maintained by the Department of the Treasury or participants in the Local Government Investment Pool (§ 2.2-4600 et seq.) and required to be provided by such participants to the Department to establish accounts in accordance with § 2.2-4602.

27. Personal information, as defined in § 2.2-3801, contained in the Veterans Care Center Resident Trust Funds concerning residents or patients of the Department of Veterans Services Care Centers, except that access shall not be denied to the person who is the subject of the information.

28. Information maintained in connection with fundraising activities by the Veterans Services Foundation pursuant to § 2.2-2716 that reveal the address, electronic mail address, facsimile or telephone number, social security number or other identification number appearing on a driver's license or other document issued under Chapter 3 (§ 46.2-300 et seq.) of Title 46.2 or the comparable law of another jurisdiction, or credit card or bank account data of identifiable donors, except that access shall not be denied to the person who is the subject of the information. Nothing in this subdivision, however, shall be construed to prevent the disclosure of information relating to the amount, date, purpose, and terms of the pledge or donation or the identity of the donor, unless the donor has requested anonymity in connection with or as a condition of making a pledge or donation. The exclusion provided by this subdivision shall not apply to protect from disclosure (i) the identities of sponsors providing grants to or contracting with the foundation for the performance of services or other work or (ii) the terms and conditions of such grants or contracts.

29. Information prepared for and utilized by the Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council in the training of state prosecutors or law-enforcement personnel, where such information is not otherwise available to the public and the disclosure of such information would reveal confidential strategies, methods, or procedures to be employed in law-enforcement activities or materials created for the investigation and prosecution of a criminal case.

30. Information provided to the Department of Aviation by other entities of the Commonwealth in connection with the operation of aircraft where the information would not be subject to disclosure by the entity providing the information. The entity providing the information to the Department of Aviation shall identify the specific information to be protected and the applicable provision of this chapter that excludes the

information from mandatory disclosure.

31. Information created or maintained by or on the behalf of the judicial performance evaluation program related to an evaluation of any individual justice or judge made confidential by § 17.1-100.

32. Information reflecting the substance of meetings in which (i) individual sexual assault cases are discussed by any sexual assault response team established pursuant to § 15.2-1627.4, (ii) individual child abuse or neglect cases or sex offenses involving a child are discussed by multidisciplinary child sexual abuse response teams established pursuant to § 15.2-1627.5, or (iii) individual cases of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of adults as defined in § 63.2-1603 are discussed by multidisciplinary teams established pursuant to §§ 15.2-1627.5 and 63.2-1605, or (iv) individual human trafficking cases are discussed by any human trafficking response team established pursuant to §15.2-1627.6. The findings of any such team may be disclosed or published in statistical or other aggregated form that does not disclose the identity of specific individuals.

33. Information contained in the strategic plan, marketing plan, or operational plan prepared by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Authority pursuant to § 2.2-2237.1 regarding target companies, specific allocation of resources and staff for marketing activities, and specific marketing activities that would reveal to the Commonwealth's competitors for economic development projects the strategies intended to be deployed by the Commonwealth, thereby adversely affecting the financial interest of the Commonwealth. The executive summaries of the strategic plan, marketing plan, and operational plan shall not be redacted or withheld pursuant to this subdivision.

34. Information discussed in a closed session of the Physical Therapy Compact Commission or the Executive Board or other committees of the Commission for purposes set forth in subsection E of § 54.1-3491.

35. Information held by the Commonwealth of Virginia Innovation Partnership Authority (the Authority), an advisory committee of the Authority, or any other entity designated by the Authority, relating to (i) internal deliberations of or decisions by the Authority on the pursuit of particular investment strategies prior to the execution of such investment strategies and (ii) trade secrets, as defined in the Uniform Trade Secrets Act (§ 59.1-336 et seq.), provided by a private entity to the Authority, if such disclosure of records pursuant to clause (i) or (ii) would have an adverse impact on the financial interest of the Authority or a private entity.

36. Personal information provided to or obtained by the Virginia Lottery in connection with the voluntary exclusion program administered pursuant to § 58.1-4015.1.

37. Personal information provided to or obtained by the Virginia Lottery concerning the identity of any person reporting prohibited conduct pursuant to § 58.1-4043.

### § 2.2-3705.8. Limitation on record exclusions.

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as denying public access to the nonexempt portions of a report of a consultant hired by or at the request of a local public body or the mayor or chief executive or administrative officer of such public body if (i) the contents of such report have been distributed or disclosed to members of the local public body or (ii) the local public body has scheduled any action on a matter that is the subject of the consultant's report.

### § 2.2-3706. Disclosure of law-enforcement and criminal records; limitations.

A. Records required to be released. All public bodies engaged in criminal law-enforcement activities shall provide the following records when requested in accordance with the provisions of this chapter:

1. Adult arrestee photographs taken during the initial intake following the arrest and as part of the routine booking procedure, except when necessary to avoid jeopardizing an investigation in felony cases until such time as the release of the photograph will no longer jeopardize the investigation;

2. Information relative to the identity of any individual, other than a juvenile, who is arrested and charged, and the status of the charge or arrest; and

3. Records of completed unattended death investigations to the parent or spouse of the decedent or, if there is no living parent or spouse, to the most immediate family member of the decedent, provided the person is not a person of interest or a suspect. For the purposes of this subdivision, "unattended death" means a death determined to be a suicide, accidental or natural death where no criminal charges will be initiated, and "immediate family" means the decedent's personal representative or, if no personal representative has qualified, the decedent's next of kin in order of intestate succession as set forth in § 64.2-200.

B. Discretionary releases. The following records are excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter, but may be disclosed by the custodian, in

his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law:

1. Criminal investigative files, defined as any documents and information, including complaints, court orders, memoranda, notes, diagrams, maps, photographs, correspondence, reports, witness statements, and evidence, relating to a criminal investigation or prosecution not required to be disclosed in accordance with § 2.2-3706.1;
2. Reports submitted in confidence to (i) state and local law-enforcement agencies, (ii) investigators authorized pursuant to Chapter 3.2 (§ 2.2-307 et seq.), and (iii) campus police departments of public institutions of higher education established pursuant to Article 3 (§ 23.1-809 et seq.) of Chapter 8 of Title 23.1;
3. Records of local law-enforcement agencies relating to neighborhood watch programs that include the names, addresses, and operating schedules of individual participants in the program that are provided to such agencies under a promise of anonymity;
4. All records of persons imprisoned in penal institutions in the Commonwealth provided such records relate to the imprisonment;
5. Records of law-enforcement agencies, to the extent that such records contain specific tactical plans, the disclosure of which would jeopardize the safety or security of law-enforcement personnel or the general public;
6. All records of adult persons under (i) investigation or supervision by a local pretrial services agency in accordance with Article 5 (§ 19.2-152.2 et seq.) of Chapter 9 of Title 19.2; (ii) investigation, probation supervision, or monitoring by a local community-based probation services agency in accordance with Article 9 (§ 9.1-173 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1; or (iii) investigation or supervision by state probation and parole services in accordance with Article 2 (§ 53.1-141 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 53.1;
7. Records of a law-enforcement agency to the extent that they disclose the telephone numbers for cellular telephones, pagers, or comparable portable communication devices provided to its personnel for use in the performance of their official duties;
8. Those portions of any records containing information related to undercover operations or protective details that would reveal the staffing, logistics, or tactical plans of such undercover operations or protective details. Nothing in this subdivision shall operate to allow the withholding of information concerning the overall costs or expenses associated with undercover operations or protective details;
9. Records of (i) background investigations of applicants for law-enforcement agency employment, (ii) administrative investigations relating to allegations of wrongdoing by employees of a law-enforcement agency, and (iii) other administrative investigations conducted by law-enforcement agencies that are made confidential by law;
10. The identity of any victim, witness, or undercover officer, or investigative techniques or procedures. However, the identity of any victim or witness shall be withheld if disclosure is prohibited or restricted under § 19.2-11.2; and
11. Records of the Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry maintained by the Department of State Police pursuant to Chapter 9 (§ 9.1-900 et seq.) of Title 9.1, including information obtained from state, local, and regional officials, except to the extent that information is required to be posted on the Internet pursuant to § 9.1-913.

C. Prohibited releases. The identity of any individual providing information about a crime or criminal activity under a promise of anonymity shall not be disclosed.

D. Noncriminal records. Public bodies (i) engaged in emergency medical services, (ii) engaged in fire protection services, (iii) engaged in criminal law-enforcement activities, or (iv) engaged in processing calls for service or other communications to an emergency 911 system or any other equivalent reporting system may withhold those portions of noncriminal incident or other noncriminal investigative reports or materials that contain identifying information of a personal, medical, or financial nature where the release of such information would jeopardize the safety or privacy of any person. Access to personnel records of persons employed by a public body engaged in emergency medical services or fire protection services, a law-enforcement agency, or an emergency 911 system or any other equivalent reporting system shall be governed by the provisions of subdivision B 9 subdivision 1 of § 2.2-3705.1, as applicable.

E. Records of any call for service or other communication to an emergency 911 system or communicated with any other equivalent reporting system shall be

subject to the provisions of this chapter.

F. Conflict resolution. In the event of conflict between this section as it relates to requests made under this section and other provisions of law, this section shall control.

## § 2.2-3706.1. Disclosure of law-enforcement records; criminal incident information and certain criminal investigative files; limitations.

A. For purposes of this section:

"Criminal investigative files" means any documents and information, including complaints, court orders, memoranda, notes, diagrams, maps, photographs, correspondence, reports, witness statements, and evidence, relating to a criminal investigation or prosecution, other than criminal incident information subject to disclosure in accordance with subsection B.

"Family representative" means the decedent's personal representative or, if no personal representative as set forth in §64.2-100 has qualified, the decedent's next of kin in order of intestate succession as set forth in § 64.2-200.

"Immediate family members" means the decedent's family representative, spouse, child, sibling, parent, grandparent, or grandchild. "Immediate family members include a stepparent, stepchild, stepsibling, and adoptive relationships.

"Ongoing" refers to a case in which the prosecution has not been finally adjudicated, the investigation continues to gather evidence for a possible future criminal case, and such case would be jeopardized by the premature release of evidence.

B. All public bodies engaged in criminal law-enforcement activities shall provide records and information when requested in accordance with the provisions of this chapter regarding criminal incident information relating to felony offenses contained in any report, notes, electronic communication, or other document, including filings through an incident-based reporting system, which shall include:

1. A general description of the criminal activity reported;
2. The date and time the alleged crime was committed;
3. The general location where the alleged crime was committed;
4. The identity of the investigating officer or other point of contact;
5. A description of any injuries suffered or property damaged or stolen; and

A verbal response as agreed to by the requester and the public body is sufficient to satisfy the requirements of this subsection.

C. Criminal investigative files relating to an ongoing criminal investigation or proceeding are excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter, but may be disclosed by the custodian, in his discretion, except as provided in subsection E or where such disclosure is prohibited by law.

D. Criminal investigative files relating to a criminal investigation or proceeding that is not ongoing are excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of this chapter, but may be disclosed by the custodian, in his discretion, except as provided in subsection E; however, such records shall be disclosed, by request, to the following persons, regardless of whether any such person is a citizen of the Commonwealth (1) The victim; (2) The victim's immediate family members, if the victim is deceased and the immediate family member to which the records are to be disclosed is not a person of interest or a suspect in the criminal investigation or proceeding; (3) The parent or guardian of the victim, if the victim is a minor and the parent or guardian is not a person of interest or a suspect in the criminal investigation or proceeding; (4) An attorney representing a petitioner in a petition for a writ of habeas corpus or writ of actual innocence pursuant to Chapter 19.2 (§19.2-327.2 et seq) of Title 19.2 or any other federal or state post-conviction proceeding or pardon; and (5) For the sole purpose of inspection at the location where such records are maintained by the public body that is the custodian of the records, (i) an attorney or his agent when such attorney is considering representing a petitioner in a post-conviction proceeding or pardon, (ii) an attorney who provides a sworn declaration that the attorney has been retained by an individual for purposes of pursuing a civil or criminal action and has a good faith basis to believe that the records being requested are material to such action, or (iii) a person who is proceeding pro se in a petition for a writ of habeas corpus or writ of actual innocence pursuant to Chapter 19.2 (§19.2-327.2 et seq.) of Title 19.2 or any other federal or state post-conviction proceeding or pardon, who provides a sworn affidavit that the records being requested are material to such action. An attorney or his agent who is in receipt of criminal investigative files or has inspected criminal investigative files pursuant to subdivision 4 or 5 shall not release such criminal investigative files or any information contained therein except as necessary to provide adequate legal advice

or representation to a person whom the attorney either represents or is considering representing in a post-conviction proceeding or pardon or represents in a civil or criminal action.

An attorney who is in receipt of criminal investigative files pursuant to subdivision 4 shall return the criminal investigative files to the public body that is the custodian of such records within 90 days of a final determination of any writ of habeas corpus, writ of actual innocence, or other federal or state post-conviction proceeding or pardon or, if no petition for such writ or post-conviction proceeding or pardon was filed, within six months of the attorneys' receipt of the records.

No disclosure for the purpose of inspection pursuant to (iii) of subdivision 5 of this subsection shall be made unless an appropriate circuit court has reviewed the affidavit provided and determined the records requested are material to the action being pursued. The court shall order the person not to disclose or otherwise release any information contained in a criminal investigative file except as necessary for the pending action and may include other conditions as appropriate.

E. The provisions of subsections C and D shall not apply if the release of such information:

1. Would interfere with a particular ongoing criminal investigation or proceeding in a particularly identifiable manner;
2. Would deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication;
3. Would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
4. Would disclose (i) the identity of a confidential source or (ii) in the case of a record compiled by a law-enforcement agency in the course of a criminal investigation, information furnished only by a confidential source;
5. Would disclose law-enforcement investigative techniques and procedures, if such disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law; or
6. Would endanger the life or physical safety of any individual.

Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to authorize the withholding of those portions of such information that are unlikely to cause any effect listed herein.

F. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection C or D, no criminal investigative file or portion thereof, except disclosure of records under subdivision D 4 of subdivision D 5, shall be disclosed to any requester pursuant to this section, unless the public body has made reasonable efforts to notify (i) the victim; (ii) the victim's immediate family members, if the victim is deceased and the immediate family member to be notified is not a person of interest or a suspect in the criminal investigation or proceeding; or (iii) the victim's parent or guardian, if the victim is a minor and the parent or guardian to be notified is not a person of interest or a suspect in the criminal investigation or proceeding.

Upon receipt of notice that a public body has received a request for criminal investigative files pursuant to this section, an individual listed in clause (i), (ii), (iii) shall have 14 days to file in an appropriate court a petition for an injunction to prevent the disclosure of the records as set forth in §8.01-622.2. The public body shall not respond to the request until at least 14 days has passed from the time notice was received by an individual listed in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) unless such individual has waived the 14-day period or at the request of the victum's insurance company or attorney. The period within which the public body shall respond to the underlying request pursuant to §2.2-3704 shall be tolled pending the notification process and any subsequent disposition by the court.

G. No photographic, audio, video, or other recording depicting a victim or allowing for a victim to be readily identified shall be released pursuant to subsection C or D to anyone except (i) the victim; (ii) the victim's family representative, if the victim is deceased and the family representative to which the records are to be disclosed is not a person of interest or a suspect in the criminal investigation or proceeding; or (iv) the victim's insurance company or attorney.

H. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the disclosure of current anonymized, aggregate location and demographic data collected pursuant to § 52-30.2 or similar data documenting law-enforcement officer encounters with members of the public.

I. In the event of a conflict between this section as it relates to requests made under this section and other provisions of law, the other provisions of law, including court sealing orders, that restrict disclosure of criminal investigative files, shall control.

### § 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. 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.

C. Every public body shall give notice of the date, time, and location 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 be posted at least three working days prior to the meeting.

D. 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.

E. 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.

F. 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.

G. 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 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.

H. 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.

## § 2.2-3707.01. Meetings of the General Assembly.

A. Except as provided in subsection B, public access to any meeting of the General Assembly or a portion thereof shall be governed by rules established by the Joint Rules Committee and approved by a majority vote of each house at the next regular session of the General Assembly. At least 60 days before the adoption

of such rules, the Joint Rules Committee shall (i) hold regional public hearings on such proposed rules and (ii) provide a copy of such proposed rules to the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council.

B. Floor sessions of either house of the General Assembly; meetings, including work sessions, of any standing or interim study committee of the General Assembly; meetings, including work sessions, of any subcommittee of such standing or interim study committee; and joint committees of conference of the General Assembly; or a quorum of any such committees or subcommittees, shall be open and governed by this chapter.

C. Meetings of the respective political party caucuses of either house of the General Assembly, including meetings conducted by telephonic or other electronic communication means, without regard to (i) whether the General Assembly is in or out of regular or special session or (ii) whether such caucuses invite staff or guests to participate in their deliberations, shall not be deemed meetings for the purposes of this chapter.

D. No regular, special, or reconvened session of the General Assembly held pursuant to Article IV, Section 6 of the Constitution of Virginia shall be conducted using electronic communication means pursuant to § 2.2-3708.2 or § 2.2-3708.3.

### § 2.2-3707.1. Posting of minutes for state boards and commissions.

All boards, commissions, councils, and other public bodies created in the executive branch of state government and subject to the provisions of this chapter shall post minutes of their meetings on such body's official public government website and on a central electronic calendar maintained by the Commonwealth. Draft minutes of meetings shall be posted as soon as possible but no later than 10 working days after the conclusion of the meeting. Final approved meeting minutes shall be posted within three working days of final approval of the minutes.

### § 2.2-3707.2 Posting of minutes for local public bodies.

Except as provided in subsection H of §2.2-3707, any local public body subject to the provisions of this chapter shall post minutes of its meetings on its official public government website, it any, within seven working days of final approval of the minutes.

If a local public body does not own or maintain an official public government website, such public body shall make copies of all meeting minutes available no later than seven working days after final approval of the minutes (i) at a prominent public location in which meeting notices are regularly posted pursuant to subdivision C 2 of §2.2-3707; (ii) at the office of the clerk of the public body; or (iii) in the case of a public body has no clerk, at the office of the chief administration.

### § 2.2-3708.2. Meetings held through electronic communication means. (Effective September 1, 2022)

Any public body, or any joint meetings thereof, may meet by electronic communication means without a quorum of the public body physically assembled at one location when the Governor has declared a state of emergency in accordance with § 44-146.17 or the locality in which the public body is located has declared a local state of emergency pursuant to § 44-146.21, provided that (i) the catastrophic nature of the declared emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe to assemble a quorum in a single location and (ii) the purpose of the meeting is to provide for the continuity of operations of the public body or the discharge of its lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities. The public body convening a meeting in accordance with this section shall:

1. Give public notice using the best available method given the nature of the emergency, which notice shall be given contemporaneously with the notice provided to members of the public body conducting the meeting;

2 Make arrangements for public access to such meeting through electronic communication means, including videoconferencing if already used by the public body;

3. Provide the public with the opportunity to comment at those meetings of the public body when public comment is customarily received; and

4. Otherwise comply with the provisions of this chapter.

The nature of the emergency, the fact that the meeting was held by electronic communication means, and the type of electronic communication means by which the meeting was held shall be stated in the minutes.

The provisions of this section 3 shall be applicable only for the duration of the emergency declared pursuant to §§ 44-146.17 or 44-146.21.

§ 2.2-3708.3 Meetings held through electronic communication means; situations other than declared states of emergency.

A. Public bodies are encouraged to (i) provide public access, both in person and through electronic com-

munication means, to public meetings and (ii) provide avenues for public comment at public meetings when public comment is customarily received, which may include public comments made in person or by electronic means or other methods.

B. Individual members of a public body may use remote participation instead of attending a public meeting in person if, in advance of the public meeting, the public body has adopted a policy as described in subsection D and the member notifies the public body chair that:

1. The member has a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance;
2. A medical condition of a member of the member's family requires the member to provide care that prevents the member's physical attendance;
3. The member's principal residence is more than 60 miles from the meeting location identified in the required notice for such meeting; or
4. The member is unable to attend the meeting due to a personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the personal matter. However, the member may not use remote participation due to personal matters more than two meetings per calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater.

If participation by a member through electronic communication means is approved pursuant to this subsection, the public body holding the meeting shall record in its minutes the remote location from which the member participated; however, the remote location need not be open to the public and may be identified in the minutes by a general description. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 1 or 2, the public body shall also include in its minutes the fact that the member participated though electronic communication means due to a (i) temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevented the member's physical attendance or (ii) family member's medical condition that required the member to provide care for such family member, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 3, the public body shall also include in its minutes the fact that the member participated through electronic communication means due to a distance between the member's principal residence and the meeting location. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 4, the public body shall also include in its minutes the specific nature of the personal matter cited by the member.

If a member's participation from a remote location pursuant to this subsection is disapproved because such participation would violate the policy adopted pursuant to subsection D, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes which specificity.

C. With the exception of local governing bodies, local school boards, planning commissions, architectural review boards, zoning appeals boards, and boards with the authority to deny, revoke, or suspend a professional or occupational license, any public body may hold all-virtual public meetings, provided that the public body follows the other requirements in this chapter for meetings, the public body has adopted a policy as described in subsection D, and;

1. An indication of whether the meeting will be an in-person or all-virtual public meeting is included in the required meeting notice along with a statement notifying the public that the method by which a pubic body chooses to meet shall not be changed unless the public body provides a new meeting notice in accordance with the provisions of §2.2-3707;
2. Public access to the all-virtual public meeting is provided via electronic communication means;
3. The electronic communication means used allows the public to hear all members of the public body participating in the all-virtual public meeting and, when audio-visual technology is available, to see the members of the public body as well;
4. A phone number or other live contact information is provided to alert the public body if the audio or video transmission of the meeting provided by the public body fails, the public body monitors such designated means of communication during the meeting, and the public body takes a recess until public access is restored if the transmission fails for the public;
5. A copy of the proposed agenda and all agenda packets and, unless exempt, all materials furnished to members of a public body for a meeting is made available to the public in electronic format at the same time that such materials are provided to members of the public body;
6. The public is afforded the opportunity to comment through electronic means, including by way

to written comments, at those public meetings when public comment is customarily received.

7. No more than two members of the public body are together in any one remote location unless that remote location is open to the public to physically access it;
8. If a closed session is held during an all-virtual public meeting, transmission of the meeting to the public resumes before the public body votes to certify the closed meeting as required by subsection D of §2.2-3712;
9. The public body does not convene an all-virtual public meeting (i) more than two times per calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater, or (ii) consecutively with another all-virtual public meeting; and
10. Minutes of all-virtual public meetings held by electronic communication means are taken as required by §2.2-3707 and include the fact that the meeting was held by electronic communication means and the type of electronic communication means by which the meeting was held. If a member's participation from a remote location pursuant to this subsection is disapproved because such participation would violate the policy adopted pursuant to subsection D, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

D. Before a public body uses all-virtual public meetings as described in subsection C or allows members to use remote participation as described in subsection B, the public body shall first adopt a policy, by a recorded vote at a public meeting, that shall be applied strictly and uniformly, without exception, to the entire membership and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or the matters that will be considered or voted on at the meeting. The policy shall:

1. Describe the circumstances under which an all-virtual public meeting and remote participation will be allowed and the process the public body will use for making requests to use remote participation, approving or denying such requests, and creating a record of such requests; and
2. Fix the number of times remote participation for personal matters or all-virtual public meetings can be used per calendar year, not to exceed the limitations set forth in subsections B 4 and C 9.

Any public body that creates a committee, subcommittee, or other entity however designated of the public body to perform delegated functions of the public body or to advise the public body may also adopt a policy on behalf of its committee, subcommittee, or other entity that shall apply to the committee, subcommittee, or other entity's use of individual remote participation and all-virtual public meetings.

### 2.2-3708.3. Meetings held through electronic communication means; situations other than declared states of emergency.

A. Public bodies are encouraged to (i) provide public access, both in person and through electronic communication means, to public meetings and (ii) provide avenues for public comment at public meetings when public comment is customarily received, which may include public comments made in person or by electronic communication means or other methods.

B. Individual members of a public body may use remote participation instead of attending a public meeting in person if, in advance of the public meeting, the public body has adopted a policy as described in subsection D and the member notifies the public body chair that:

1. The member has a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance. For purposes of determining whether a quorum is physically assembled, an individual member of a public body who is a person with a disability as defined in §51.5-40.1 and uses remote participation counts toward the quorum as if the individual was physically present;
2. A medical condition of a member of the member's family requires the member to provide care that prevents the member's physical attendance or the member is a caregiver who must provide care for a person with a disability at the time the public meeting is being held thereby preventing the member's physical attendance. For purposes of determining whether a quorum is physically assembled, an individual member of a public body who is a caregiver for a person with a disability and uses remote participation counts toward the quorum as if the individual was physically present.
3. The member's principal residence is more than 60 miles from the meeting location identified in the required notice for such meeting; or
4. The member is unable to attend the meeting due to a personal matter and identifies with specific-

ity the nature of the personal matter. However, the member may not use remote participation due to personal matters more than two meetings per calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater.

If participation by a member through electronic communication means is approved pursuant to this subsection, the public body holding the meeting shall record in its minutes the remote location from which the member participated; however, the remote location need not be open to the public and may be identified in the minutes by a general description. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 1 or 2, the public body shall also include in its minutes the fact that the member participated through electronic communication means due to a (i) temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevented the member's physical attendance or (ii) family member's medical condition that required the member to provide care for such family member, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 3, the public body shall also include in its minutes the fact that the member participated through electronic communication means due to the distance between the member's principal residence and the meeting location. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 4, the public body shall also include in its minutes the specific nature of the personal matter cited by the member.

If a member's participation from a remote location pursuant to this subsection is disapproved because such participation would violate the policy adopted pursuant to subsection D, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

C. With the exception of local governing bodies, local school boards, planning commissions, architectural review boards, zoning appeals boards, and boards with the authority to deny, revoke, or suspend a professional or occupational license, any public body may hold all-virtual public meetings, provided that the public body follows the other requirements in this chapter for meetings, the public body has adopted a policy as described in subsection D, and:

1. An indication of whether the meeting will be an in-person or all-virtual public meeting is included in the required meeting notice along with a statement notifying the public that the method by which a public body chooses to meet shall not be changed unless the public body provides a new meeting notice in accordance with the provisions of § 2.2-3707;
2. Public access to the all-virtual public meeting is provided via electronic communication means;
3. The electronic communication means used allows the public to hear all members of the public body participating in the all-virtual public meeting and, when audio-visual technology is available, to see the members of the public body as well;
4. A phone number or other live contact information is provided to alert the public body if the audio or video transmission of the meeting provided by the public body fails, the public body monitors such designated means of communication during the meeting, and the public body takes a recess until public access is restored if the transmission fails for the public;
5. A copy of the proposed agenda and all agenda packets and, unless exempt, all materials furnished to members of a public body for a meeting is made available to the public in electronic format at the same time that such materials are provided to members of the public body;
6. The public is afforded the opportunity to comment through electronic means, including by way of written comments, at those public meetings when public comment is customarily received;
7. No more than two members of the public body are together in any one remote location unless that remote location is open to the public to physically access it;
8. If a closed session is held during an all-virtual public meeting, transmission of the meeting to the public resumes before the public body votes to certify the closed meeting as required by subsection D of § 2.2-3712;
9. The public body does not convene an all-virtual public meeting (i) more than two times per calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater, or (ii) consecutively with another all-virtual public meeting; and
10. Minutes of all-virtual public meetings held by electronic communication means are taken as required by § 2.2-3707 and include the fact that the meeting was held by electronic communication means and the type of electronic communication

means by which the meeting was held. If a member's participation from a remote location pursuant to this subsection is disapproved because such participation would violate the policy adopted pursuant to subsection D, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

D. Before a public body uses all-virtual public meetings as described in subsection C or allows members to use remote participation as described in subsection B, the public body shall first adopt a policy, by recorded vote at a public meeting, that shall be applied strictly and uniformly, without exception, to the entire membership and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or the matters that will be considered or voted on at the meeting. The policy shall:

1. Describe the circumstances under which an all-virtual public meeting and remote participation will be allowed and the process the public body will use for making requests to use remote participation, approving or denying such requests, and creating a record of such requests; and
2. Fix the number of times remote participation for personal matters or all-virtual public meetings can be used per calendar year, not to exceed the limitations set forth in subdivisions B 4 and C 9.

The policy shall not prohibit or restrict any individual member of a public body who is participating in an all-virtual meeting or who is using remote participation from voting on matters before the public body.

Any public body that creates a committee, subcommittee, or other entity however designated of the public body to perform delegated functions of the public body or to advise the public body may also adopt a policy on behalf of its committee, subcommittee, or other entity that shall apply to the committee, subcommittee, or other entity's use of individual remote participation and all-virtual public meetings.

## § 2.2-3710. Transaction of public business other than by votes at meetings prohibited.

A. Unless otherwise specifically provided by law, no vote of any kind of the membership, or any part thereof, of any public body shall be taken to authorize the transaction of any public business, other than a vote taken at a meeting conducted in accordance with the provisions of this chapter. No public body shall vote by secret or written ballot, and unless expressly provided by this chapter, no public body shall vote by telephone or other electronic communication means.

B. Notwithstanding the foregoing, nothing contained herein shall be construed to prohibit (i) separately contacting the membership, or any part thereof, of any public body for the purpose of ascertaining a member's position with respect to the transaction of public business, whether such contact is done in person, by telephone or by electronic communication, provided the contact is done on a basis that does not constitute a meeting as defined in this chapter or (ii) the House of Delegates or the Senate of Virginia from adopting rules relating to the casting of votes by members of standing committees. Nothing in this subsection shall operate to exclude any public record from the provisions of this chapter.

## § 2.2-3711. Closed meetings authorized for certain limited purposes.

A. Public bodies may hold closed meetings only for the following purposes:

1. Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body; and evaluation of performance of departments or schools of public institutions of higher education where such evaluation will necessarily involve discussion of the performance of specific individuals. Any teacher shall be permitted to be present during a closed meeting in which there is a discussion or consideration of a disciplinary matter that involves the teacher and some student and the student involved in the matter is present, provided the teacher makes a written request to be present to the presiding officer of the appropriate board. Nothing in this subdivision, however, shall be construed to authorize a closed meeting by a local governing body or an elected school board to discuss compensation matters that affect the membership of such body or board collectively.
2. Discussion or consideration of admission or disciplinary matters or any other matters that would involve the disclosure of information contained in a scholastic record concerning any student of any public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth or any state school system. However, any such student, legal counsel and, if the student is a minor, the student's parents or legal guardians shall be permitted to be present during the taking of testimony or presentation of evidence at a closed meeting, if such student, parents, or guardians so request in writing and

such request is submitted to the presiding officer of the appropriate board.

3. Discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body.
4. The protection of the privacy of individuals in personal matters not related to public business.
5. Discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business' or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community.
6. Discussion or consideration of the investment of public funds where competition or bargaining is involved, where, if made public initially, the financial interest of the governmental unit would be adversely affected.
7. Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body. For the purposes of this subdivision, "probable litigation" means litigation that has been specifically threatened or on which the public body or its legal counsel has a reasonable basis to believe will be commenced by or against a known party. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to permit the closure of a meeting merely because an attorney representing the public body is in attendance or is consulted on a matter.
8. Consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to permit the closure of a meeting merely because an attorney representing the public body is in attendance or is consulted on a matter.
9. Discussion or consideration by governing boards of public institutions of higher education of matters relating to gifts, bequests and fund-raising activities, and of grants and contracts for services or work to be performed by such institution. However, the terms and conditions of any such gifts, bequests, grants, and contracts made by a foreign government, a foreign legal entity, or a foreign person and accepted by a public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth shall be subject to public disclosure upon written request to the appropriate board of visitors. For the purpose of this subdivision, (i) "foreign government" means any government other than the United States government or the government of a state or a political subdivision thereof, (ii) "foreign legal entity" means any legal entity (a) created under the laws of the United States or of any state thereof if a majority of the ownership of the stock of such legal entity is owned by foreign governments or foreign persons or if a majority of the membership of any such entity is composed of foreign persons or foreign legal entities or (b) created under the laws of a foreign government, and (iii) "foreign person" means any individual who is not a citizen or national of the United States or a trust territory or protectorate thereof.
10. Discussion or consideration by the boards of trustees of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Virginia Museum of Natural History, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, the Fort Monroe Authority, and The Science Museum of Virginia of matters relating to specific gifts, bequests, and grants from private sources.
11. Discussion or consideration of honorary degrees or special awards.
12. Discussion or consideration of tests, examinations, or other information used, administered, or prepared by a public body and subject to the exclusion in subdivision 4 of § 2.2-3705.1.
13. Discussion, consideration, or review by the appropriate House or Senate committees of possible disciplinary action against a member arising out of the possible inadequacy of the disclosure statement filed by the member, provided the member may request in writing that the committee meeting not be conducted in a closed meeting.
14. Discussion of strategy with respect to the negotiation of a hazardous waste siting agreement or to consider the terms, conditions, and provisions of a hazardous waste siting agreement if the governing body in open meeting finds that an open meeting will have an adverse effect upon the negotiating position of the governing body or the establishment of the terms, conditions and provisions of the siting agreement, or both. All discussions with the applicant or its representatives may be conducted in a closed meeting.

15. Discussion by the Governor and any economic advisory board reviewing forecasts of economic activity and estimating general and nongeneral fund revenues.

16. Discussion or consideration of medical and mental health records subject to the exclusion in subdivision 1 of § 2.2-3705.5.

17. Deliberations of the Virginia Lottery Board in a licensing appeal action conducted pursuant to subsection D of § 58.1-4007 regarding the denial or revocation of a license of a lottery sales agent; and discussion, consideration or review of Virginia Lottery matters related to proprietary lottery game information and studies or investigations excluded from disclosure under subdivision 6 of § 2.2-3705.3 and subdivision 11 of § 2.2-3705.7.

18. Those portions of meetings in which the State Board of Local and Regional Jails discusses or discloses the identity of, or information tending to identify, any prisoner who (i) provides information about crimes or criminal activities, (ii) renders assistance in preventing the escape of another prisoner or in the apprehension of an escaped prisoner, or (iii) voluntarily or at the instance of a prison official renders other extraordinary services, the disclosure of which is likely to jeopardize the prisoner's life or safety.

19. Discussion of plans to protect public safety as it relates to terrorist activity or specific cybersecurity threats or vulnerabilities and briefings by staff members, legal counsel, or law-enforcement or emergency service officials concerning actions taken to respond to such matters or a related threat to public safety; discussion of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 2 or 14 of § 2.2-3705.2, where discussion in an open meeting would jeopardize the safety of any person or the security of any facility, building, structure, information technology system, or software program; or discussion of reports or plans related to the security of any governmental facility, building or structure, or the safety of persons using such facility, building or structure.

20. Discussion by the Board of the Virginia Retirement System, acting pursuant to § 51.1-124.30, or of any local retirement system, acting pursuant to § 51.1-803, or by a local finance board or board of trustees of a trust established by one or more local public bodies to invest funds for postemployment benefits other than pensions, acting pursuant to Article 8 (§ 15.2-1544 et seq.) of Chapter 15 of Title 15.2, or by the board of visitors of the University of Virginia, acting pursuant to § 23.1-2210, or by the Board of the Commonwealth Savers Plan, acting pursuant to § 23.1-706, regarding the acquisition, holding or disposition of a security or other ownership interest in an entity, where such security or ownership interest is not traded on a governmentally regulated securities exchange, to the extent that such discussion (i) concerns confidential analyses prepared for the board of visitors of the University of Virginia, prepared by the retirement system, or a local finance board or board of trustees, or the Commonwealth Savers Plan or provided to the retirement system, a local finance board or board of trustees, or the Commonwealth Savers Plan under a promise of confidentiality, of the future value of such ownership interest or the future financial performance of the entity, and (ii) would have an adverse effect on the value of the investment to be acquired, held, or disposed of by the retirement system, a local finance board or board of trustees, the board of visitors of the University of Virginia, or the Commonwealth Savers Plan. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prevent the disclosure of information relating to the identity of any investment held, the amount invested or the present value of such investment.

21. Those portions of meetings in which individual child death cases are discussed by the State Child Fatality Review Team established pursuant to § 32.1-283.1, those portions of meetings in which individual child death cases are discussed by a regional or local child fatality review team established pursuant to § 32.1-283.2, those portions of meetings in which individual death cases are discussed by family violence fatality review teams established pursuant to § 32.1-283.3, those portions of meetings in which individual adult death cases are discussed by the state Adult Fatality Review Team established pursuant to § 32.1-283.5, those portions of meetings in which individual adult death cases are discussed by a local or regional adult fatality review team established pursuant to § 32.1-283.6, those portions of meetings in which individual death cases are discussed by overdose fatality review teams established pursuant to § 32.1-283.7, those portions of meetings in which individual maternal death cases are discussed by the Maternal Mortality Review Team pursuant to § 32.1-283.8, and those

portions of meetings in which individual death cases of persons with developmental disabilities are discussed by the Developmental Disabilities Mortality Review Committee established pursuant to § 37.2-314.1.

22. Those portions of meetings of the board of visitors of the University of Virginia or the Eastern Virginia Medical School Board of Visitors, as the case may be, and those portions of meetings of any persons to whom management responsibilities for the University of Virginia Medical Center or Eastern Virginia Medical School, as the case may be, have been delegated, in which there is discussed proprietary, business-related information pertaining to the operations of the University of Virginia Medical Center or Eastern Virginia Medical School, as the case may be, including business development or marketing strategies and activities with existing or future joint venturers, partners, or other parties with whom the University of Virginia Medical Center or Eastern Virginia Medical School, as the case may be, has formed, or forms, any arrangement for the delivery of health care, if disclosure of such information would adversely affect the competitive position of the Medical Center or Eastern Virginia Medical School, as the case may be.

23. Discussion or consideration by the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System Authority or the board of visitors of Virginia Commonwealth University of any of the following: the acquisition or disposition by the Authority of real property, equipment, or technology software or hardware and related goods or services, where disclosure would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the Authority; matters relating to gifts or bequests to, and fundraising activities of, the Authority; grants and contracts for services or work to be performed by the Authority; marketing or operational strategies plans of the Authority where disclosure of such strategies or plans would adversely affect the competitive position of the Authority; and members of the Authority's medical and teaching staffs and qualifications for appointments thereto.

24. Those portions of the meetings of the Health Practitioners' Monitoring Program Committee within the Department of Health Professions to the extent such discussions identify any practitioner who may be, or who actually is, impaired pursuant to Chapter 25.1 (§ 54.1-2515 et seq.) of Title 54.1.

25. Meetings or portions of meetings of the Board of the Commonwealth Savers Plan wherein personal information, as defined in § 2.2-3801, which has been provided to the Board or its employees by or on behalf of individuals who have requested information about, applied for, or entered into prepaid tuition contracts or savings trust account agreements pursuant to Chapter 7 (§ 23.1-700 et seq.) of Title 23.1 is discussed.

26. Discussion or consideration, by the former Wireless Carrier E-911 Cost Recovery Subcommittee created pursuant to former § 56-484.15, of trade secrets submitted by CMRS providers, as defined in § 56-484.12, related to the provision of wireless E-911 service.

27. Those portions of disciplinary proceedings by any regulatory board within the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation, Department of Health Professions, or the Board of Accountancy conducted pursuant to § 2.2-4019 or 2.2-4020 during which the board deliberates to reach a decision or meetings of health regulatory boards or conference committees of such boards to consider settlement proposals in pending disciplinary actions or modifications to previously issued board orders as requested by either of the parties.

28. Discussion or consideration of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 11 of § 2.2-3705.6 by a responsible public entity or an affected locality or public entity, as those terms are defined in § 33.2-1800, or any independent review panel appointed to review information and advise the responsible public entity concerning such records.

29. Discussion of the award of a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the terms or scope of such contract, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body.

30. Discussion or consideration of grant or loan application information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 17 of § 2.2-3705.6 by the Commonwealth Health Research Board.

31. Discussion or consideration by the Commitment Review Committee of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 5 of § 2.2-3705.2 relating to individuals subject to commitment as sexually violent predators under Chapter 9 (§ 37.2-900 et seq.) of Title 37.2.

32. Discussion or consideration of confidential proprietary information and trade secrets developed and held by a local public body providing certain telecommunication services or cable television services and subject to the exclusion in subdivision 18 of § 2.2-3705.6. However, the exemption provided by this subdivision shall not apply to any authority created pursuant to the BVU Authority Act (§ 15.2-7200 et seq.).

33. Discussion or consideration by a local authority created in accordance with the Virginia Wireless Service Authorities Act (§ 15.2-5431.1 et seq.) of confidential proprietary information and trade secrets subject to the exclusion in subdivision 19 of § 2.2-3705.6.

34. Discussion or consideration by the State Board of Elections or local electoral boards of voting security matters made confidential pursuant to §§ 24.2-410.2 or 24.2-625.1.

35. Discussion or consideration by the Forensic Science Board or the Scientific Advisory Committee created pursuant to Article 2 (§ 9.1-1109 et seq.) of Chapter 11 of Title 9.1 of criminal investigative files.

36. Discussion or consideration by the Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Committee of information or confidential matters subject to the exclusion in subdivision A 3 of § 2.2-3705.4, and meetings of the Committee to deliberate concerning the annual maximum scholarship award, review and consider scholarship applications and requests for scholarship award renewal, and cancel, rescind, or recover scholarship awards.

37. Discussion or consideration by the Virginia Port Authority of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 1 of § 2.2-3705.6 related to certain proprietary information gathered by or for the Virginia Port Authority.

38. Discussion or consideration by the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Retirement System acting pursuant to § 51.1-124.30, by the Investment Advisory Committee appointed pursuant to § 51.1-124.26, by any local retirement system, acting pursuant to § 51.1-803, by the Board of the Commonwealth Savers Plan acting pursuant to § 23.1-706, or by the Commonwealth Savers Plan's Investment Advisory Committee appointed pursuant to § 23.1-702 of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 24 of § 2.2-3705.7.

39. Discussion or consideration of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 3 of § 2.2-3705.6 related to economic development.

40. Discussion or consideration by the Board of Education of information relating to the denial, suspension, or revocation of teacher licenses subject to the exclusion in subdivision 11 of § 2.2-3705.3.

41. Those portions of meetings of the Virginia Military Advisory Council or any commission created by executive order for the purpose of studying and making recommendations regarding preventing closure or realignment of federal military and national security installations and facilities located in Virginia and relocation of such facilities to Virginia, or a local or regional military affairs organization appointed by a local governing body, during which there is discussion of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 8 of § 2.2-3705.2.

42. Discussion or consideration by the Board of Trustees of the Veterans Services Foundation of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 28 of § 2.2-3705.7 related to personally identifiable information of donors.

43. Discussion or consideration by the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 23 of § 2.2-3705.6 related to certain information contained in grant applications.

44. Discussion or consideration by the board of directors of the Commercial Space Flight Authority of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 24 of § 2.2-3705.6 related to rate structures or charges for the use of projects of, the sale of products of, or services rendered by the Authority and certain proprietary information of a private entity provided to the Authority.

45. Discussion or consideration of personal and proprietary information related to the resource management plan program and subject to the exclusion in (i) subdivision 25 of § 2.2-3705.6 or (ii) subsection E of § 10.1-104.7. This exclusion shall not apply to the discussion or consideration of records that contain information that has been certified for release by the person who is the subject of the information or transformed into a statistical or aggregate form that does not allow identification of the person who supplied, or is the subject of, the information.

46. Discussion or consideration by the Board of Directors of the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 1 of § 2.2-3705.3 related to investigations of applicants for licenses and permits and of licensees and permittees.

47. Discussion or consideration of grant, loan, or investment application records subject to the exclusion in subdivision 28 of § 2.2-3705.6 for a grant, loan, or investment pursuant to Article 11 (§ 2.2-2351 et seq.) of Chapter 22.

48. Discussion or development of grant proposals by a regional council established pursuant to Article 26 (§ 2.2-2484 et seq.) of Chapter 24 to be submitted for consideration to the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Board.

49. Discussion or consideration of (i) individual sexual assault cases by a sexual assault response team established pursuant to § 15.2-1627.4, (ii) individual child abuse or neglect cases or sex offenses involving a child by a child sexual abuse response team established pursuant to § 15.2-1627.5, (iii) individual cases involving abuse, neglect, or exploitation of adults as defined in § 63.2-1603 pursuant to §§ 15.2-1627.5 and § 63.2-1605, or (iv) individual human trafficking cases by any human trafficking response team established pursuant to §15.2-1627.6.

50. Discussion or consideration by the Board of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Authority, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, or any subcommittees thereof, of the portions of the strategic plan, marketing plan, or operational plan exempt from disclosure pursuant to subdivision 33 of § 2.2-3705.7.

51. Those portions of meetings of the subcommittee of the Board of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Authority established pursuant to subsection F of § 2.2-2237.3 to review and discuss information received from the Virginia Employment Commission pursuant to subdivision C 2 of § 60.2-114.

52. Discussion or consideration by the Commonwealth of Virginia Innovation Partnership Authority (the Authority), an advisory committee of the Authority, or any other entity designated by the Authority, of information subject to the exclusion in subdivision 35 of § 2.2-3705.7.

53. Deliberations of the Virginia Lottery Board conducted pursuant to § 58.1-4105 regarding the denial or revocation of a license of a casino gaming operator, or the refusal to issue, suspension of, or revocation of any license or permit related to casino gaming, and discussion, consideration, or review of matters related to investigations excluded from mandatory disclosure under subdivision 1 of § 2.2-3705.3.

54. Deliberations of the Virginia Lottery Board in an appeal conducted pursuant to § 58.1-4007 regarding the denial of, revocation of, suspension of, or refusal to renew any license or permit related to sports betting and any discussion, consideration, or review of matters related to investigations excluded from mandatory disclosure under subdivision 1 of § 2.2-3705.3.

55. Meetings or portions of meetings of the Board of Criminal Justice Services or the Department of Criminal Justice Services concerning the decertification of an identifiable law-enforcement or jail officer.

B. No resolution, ordinance, rule, contract, regulation or motion adopted, passed or agreed to in a closed meeting shall become effective unless the public body, following the meeting, reconvenes in open meeting and takes a vote of the membership on such resolution, ordinance, rule, contract, regulation, or motion that shall have its substance reasonably identified in the open meeting.

C. Public officers improperly selected due to the failure of the public body to comply with the other provisions of this section shall be de facto officers and, as such, their official actions are valid until they obtain notice of the legal defect in their election.

D. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the holding of conferences between two or more public bodies, or their representatives, but these conferences shall be subject to the same procedures for holding closed meetings as are applicable to any other public body.

E. This section shall not be construed to (i) require the disclosure of any contract between the Department of Health Professions and an impaired practitioner entered into pursuant to Chapter 25.1 (§ 54.1-2515 et seq.) of Title 54.1 or (ii) require the board of directors of any authority created pursuant to the Industrial Development and Revenue Bond Act (§ 15.2-4900 et seq.), or any public body empowered to issue industrial revenue bonds by general or special law, to identify a business or industry to which subdivision A 5 applies. However, such business or industry shall be identified

as a matter of public record at least 30 days prior to the actual date of the board's authorization of the sale or issuance of such bonds.

### § 2.2-3712. Closed meetings procedures; certification of proceedings.

A. No closed meeting shall be held unless the public body proposing to convene such meeting has taken an affirmative recorded vote in an open meeting approving a motion that (i) identifies the subject matter, (ii) states the purpose of the meeting as authorized in subsection A of § 2.2-3711 or other provision of law and (iii) cites the applicable exemption from open meeting requirements provided in subsection A of § 2.2-3711 or other provision of law. The matters contained in such motion shall be set forth in detail in the minutes of the open meeting. A general reference to the provisions of this chapter, the authorized exemptions from open meeting requirements, or the subject matter of the closed meeting shall not be sufficient to satisfy the requirements for holding a closed meeting.

B. The notice provisions of this chapter shall not apply to closed meetings of any public body held solely for the purpose of interviewing candidates for the position of chief administrative officer. Prior to any such closed meeting for the purpose of interviewing candidates, the public body shall announce in an open meeting that such closed meeting shall be held at a disclosed or undisclosed location within 15 days thereafter.

C. The public body holding a closed meeting shall restrict its discussion during the closed meeting only to those matters specifically exempted from the provisions of this chapter and identified in the motion required by subsection A.

D. At the conclusion of any closed meeting, the public body holding such meeting shall immediately reconvene in an open meeting and shall take a roll call or other recorded vote to be included in the minutes of that body, certifying that to the best of each member's knowledge (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under this chapter and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting by the public body. Any member of the public body who believes that there was a departure from the requirements of clauses (i) and (ii), shall so state prior to the vote, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his judgment, has taken place. The statement shall be recorded in the minutes of the public body.

E. Failure of the certification required by subsection D to receive the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the public body present during a meeting shall not affect the validity or confidentiality of such meeting with respect to matters considered therein in compliance with the provisions of this chapter. The recorded vote and any statement made in connection therewith, shall upon proper authentication, constitute evidence in any proceeding brought to enforce the provisions of this chapter.

F. A public body may permit nonmembers to attend a closed meeting if such persons are deemed necessary or if their presence will reasonably aid the public body in its consideration of a topic that is a subject of the meeting.

G. A member of a public body shall be permitted to attend a closed meeting held by any committee or subcommittee of that public body, or a closed meeting of any entity, however designated, created to perform the delegated functions of or to advise that public body. Such member shall in all cases be permitted to observe the closed meeting of the committee, subcommittee or entity. In addition to the requirements of § 2.2-3707, the minutes of the committee or other entity shall include the identity of the member of the parent public body who attended the closed meeting.

H. Except as specifically authorized by law, in no event may any public body take action on matters discussed in any closed meeting, except at an open meeting for which notice was given as required by § 2.2-3707.

I. Minutes may be taken during closed meetings of a public body, but shall not be required. Such minutes shall not be subject to mandatory public disclosure.

### § 2.2-3713. Proceedings for enforcement of chapter.

A. Any person, including the attorney for the Commonwealth acting in his official or individual capacity, denied the rights and privileges conferred by this chapter may proceed to enforce such rights and privileges by filing a petition for mandamus or injunction, supported by an affidavit showing good cause. Such petition may be brought in the name of the person notwithstanding that a request for public records was made by the person's attorney in his representative capacity. Venue for the petition shall be addressed as follows:

1. In a case involving a local public body, to the general district court or circuit court of the county or city from which the public body has been elected or appointed to serve and in which such rights and privileges were so denied;

2. In a case involving a regional public body, to the

general district or circuit court of the county or city where the principal business office of such body is located; and

3. In a case involving a board, bureau, commission, authority, district, institution, or agency of the state government, including a public institution of higher education, or a standing or other committee of the General Assembly, to the general district court or the circuit court of the residence of the aggrieved party or of the City of Richmond.

B. In any action brought before a general district court, a corporate petitioner may appear through its officer, director or managing agent without the assistance of counsel, notwithstanding any provision of law or Rule of Supreme Court of Virginia to the contrary.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of § 8.01-644, the petition for mandamus or injunction shall be heard within seven days of the date when the same is made, provided the party against whom the petition is brought has received a copy of the petition at least three working days prior to filing. However, if the petition or the affidavit supporting the petition for mandamus or injunction alleges violations of the open meetings requirements of this chapter, the three-day notice to the party against whom the petition is brought shall not be required. The hearing on any petition made outside of the regular terms of the circuit court of a locality that is included in a judicial circuit with another locality or localities shall be given precedence on the docket of such court over all cases that are not otherwise given precedence by law.

D. The petition shall allege with reasonable specificity the circumstances of the denial of the rights and privileges conferred by this chapter. A single instance of denial of the rights and privileges conferred by this chapter shall be sufficient to invoke the remedies granted herein. If the court finds the denial to be in violation of the provisions of this chapter, the petitioner shall be entitled to recover reasonable costs, including costs and reasonable fees for expert witnesses, and attorney fees from the public body if the petitioner substantially prevails on the merits of the case, unless special circumstances would make an award unjust. In making this determination, a court may consider, among other things, the reliance of a public body on an opinion of the Attorney General or a decision of a court that substantially supports the public body's position.

E. In any action to enforce the provisions of this chapter, the public body shall bear the burden of proof to establish an exclusion by a preponderance of the evidence. No court shall be required to accord any weight to the determination of a public body as to whether an exclusion applies. Any failure by a public body to follow the procedures established by this chapter shall be presumed to be a violation of this chapter.

F. Failure by any person to request and receive notice of the time and place of meetings as provided in § 2.2-3707 shall not preclude any person from enforcing his rights and privileges conferred by this chapter.

### § 2.2-3714. Violations and penalties. (Effective September 1, 2022)

A. In a proceeding commenced against any officer, employee, or member of a public body under § 2.2-3713 for a violation of § § 2.2-3704, § 2.2-3705.1 through § 2.2-3705.7, § 2.2-3706, § 2.2-3706.1, § 2.2-3707, § 2.2-3708.2, §2.2-3708.3, § 2.2-3710, § 2.2-3711 or § 2.2-3712, the court, if it finds that a violation was willfully and knowingly made, shall impose upon such officer, employee, or member in his individual capacity, whether a writ of mandamus or injunctive relief is awarded or not, a civil penalty of not less than $500 nor more than $2,000, which amount shall be paid into the Literary Fund. For a second or subsequent violation, such civil penalty shall be not less than $2,000 nor more than $5,000.

B. In addition to any penalties imposed pursuant to subsection A, if the court finds that any officer, employee, or member of a public body failed to provide public records to a requester in accordance with the provisions of this chapter because such officer, employee, or member altered or destroyed the requested public records with the intent to avoid the provisions of this chapter with respect to such request prior to the expiration of the applicable record retention period set by the retention regulations promulgated pursuant to the Virginia Public Records Act (§ 42.1-76 et seq.) by the State Library Board, the court may impose upon such officer, employee, or member in his individual capacity, whether or not a writ of mandamus or injunctive relief is awarded, a civil penalty of up to $100 per record altered or destroyed, which amount shall be paid into the Literary Fund.

C. In addition to any penalties imposed pursuant to subsections A and B, if the court finds that a public body voted to certify a closed meeting in accordance with subsection D of § 2.2-3712 and such certification was not in accordance with the requirements of clause (i) or (ii) of subsection D of § 2.2-3712, the court may impose on the public body, whether or not a writ of mandamus or injunctive relief is awarded, a civil penalty of up to $1,000, which amount shall be paid into the Literary Fund. In determining whether a civil penalty is appropriate, the court shall consider mitigat-

ing factors, including reliance of members of the public body on (i) opinions of the Attorney General, (ii) court cases substantially supporting the rationale of the public body, and (iii) published opinions of the Freedom of Information Advisory Council.

### § 2.2-3715. Effect of advisory opinions from the Freedom of Information Advisory Council on liability for willful and knowing violations.

Any officer, employee, or member of a public body who is alleged to have committed a willful and knowing violation pursuant to § 2.2-3714 shall have the right to introduce at any proceeding a copy of a relevant advisory opinion issued pursuant to § 30-179 as evidence that he did not willfully and knowingly commit the violation if the alleged violation resulted from his good faith reliance on the advisory opinion.

## Title 2.2. Administration of Government, Chapter 43. Virginia Public Procurement Act

### § 2.2-4342. Public inspection of certain records.

A. Except as provided in this section, all proceedings, records, contracts and other public records relating to procurement transactions shall be open to the inspection of any citizen, or any interested person, firm or corporation, in accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.).

B. Cost estimates relating to a proposed procurement transaction prepared by or for a public body shall not be open to public inspection.

C. Any competitive sealed bidding bidder, upon request, shall be afforded the opportunity to inspect bid records within a reasonable time after the opening of all bids but prior to award, except in the event that the public body decides not to accept any of the bids and to reopen the contract. Otherwise, bid records shall be open to public inspection only after award of the contract.

D. Any competitive negotiation offeror, upon request, shall be afforded the opportunity to inspect proposal records within a reasonable time after the evaluation and negotiations of proposals are completed but prior to award, except in the event that the public body decides not to accept any of the proposals and to reopen the contract. Otherwise, proposal records shall be open to public inspection only after award of the contract.

E. Any inspection of procurement transaction records under this section shall be subject to reasonable restrictions to ensure the security and integrity of the records.

F. Trade secrets or proprietary information submitted by a bidder, offeror, or contractor in connection with a procurement transaction or prequalification application submitted pursuant to subsection B of § 2.2-4317 shall not be subject to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.); however, the bidder, offeror, or contractor shall (i) invoke the protections of this section prior to or upon submission of the data or other materials, (ii) identify the data or other materials to be protected, and (iii) state the reasons why protection is necessary. A bidder, offeror, or contractor shall not designate as trade secrets or proprietary information (a) an entire bid, proposal, or prequalification application; (b) any portion of a bid, proposal, or prequalification application that does not contain trade secrets or proprietary information; or (c) line item prices or total bid, proposal, or prequalification application prices.

## Title 8.01 Civil Remedies and Procedure

### § 8.01-622.2 Injunction against disclosure of criminal investigative file materials under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

Except with respect to the disclosure of records under 4 subdivision D or clause (1) of subdivision D of §2.2-3706.1, an injunction may be awarded to prevent the disclosure of records related to criminal investigative files requested under §2.2-3706.1 of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§2.2-3700 et seq.).

In making its determination, a court shall consider the following and shall enter its findings on the record:

1. Whether disclosure of the public records would constitute an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy;
2. Whether disclosure of the public records would endanger the life of physical safety of any individual;
3. Whether disclosure of the public records would subject (i) the victim; (ii) the victim's immediate family members as set forth in §2.2-3706.1, if the victim is deceased and the immediate family member is not a person of interest or a suspect in the criminal investigation or proceeding; or (iii) the parent or guardian of the victim, if the victim is a minor and the parent or guardian is not a person of interest or a suspect in the criminal investigation or proceeding, to severe mental or emotional distress; and

4. Any other factor or information deemed by the court to be relevant.

## Title 15.2. Counties, Cities and Towns » Subtitle II. Powers of Local Government » Chapter 14. Governing Bodies of Localities

### § 15.2-1416. Regular meetings.

A. The governing body shall assemble at a public place as the governing body may prescribe, in regular session in January for counties and in July for cities and towns. Future meetings shall be held on such days as may be prescribed by resolution of the governing body but in no event shall less than six meetings be held in each fiscal year.

B. The days, times and places of regular meetings to be held during the ensuing months shall be established at the first meeting which meeting may be referred to as the annual or organizational meeting; however, if the governing body subsequently prescribes any public place other than the initial public meeting place, or any day or time other than that initially established, as a meeting day, place or time, the governing body shall pass a resolution as to such future meeting day, place or time. The governing body shall cause a copy of such resolution to be posted on the door of the courthouse or the initial public meeting place and inserted in a newspaper having general circulation in the county or municipality at least seven days prior to the first such meeting at such other day, place or time. Should the day established by the governing body as the regular meeting day fall on any legal holiday, the meeting shall be held on the next following regular business day, without action of any kind by the governing body.

At its annual meeting the governing body may fix the day or days to which a regular meeting shall be continued if the chairman or mayor, or vice-chairman or vice-mayor if the chairman or mayor is unable to act, finds and declares that weather or other conditions are such that it is hazardous for members to attend the regular meeting. Such finding shall be communicated to the members and the press as promptly as possible. All hearings and other matters previously advertised shall be conducted at the continued meeting and no further advertisement is required.

C. Regular meetings may be adjourned from day to day or from time to time or from place to place, not beyond the time fixed for the next regular meeting, until the business before the governing body is completed. Notice of any regular meeting continued under this section shall be reasonable under the circumstances and be given as provided in subsection D of § 2.2-3707.

D. The governing body shall provide members of the general public with the opportunity for public comment during a regular meeting at least quarterly.

E. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, any city or town that holds an organizational meeting in compliance with its charter or code shall be deemed to be in compliance with this section.

## Title 15.2. Counties, Cities and Towns, Chapter 21. Franchises; Sale and Lease of Certain Municipal Public Property; Public Utilities

### § 15.2-2103.1. Solar services agreements; nondisclosure of proprietary information.

A. A solar services agreement may be structured as a service agreement or may be subject to available appropriation.

B. Nothing in this article shall be construed to require the disclosure of proprietary information voluntarily provided by a private entity in connection with a franchise, lease, or use under a solar services agreement that is excluded from mandatory disclosure pursuant to subdivision 29 of § 2.2-3705.6 of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.).

C. Nothing in this section, however, shall be construed as authorizing the withholding of the financial terms of such agreements.

## Title 17.1. Courts of Record, Chapter 2. Clerks, Clerks' Offices and Records

### § 17.1-293. (Effective until January 1, 2021) Posting and availability of certain information on the Internet; prohibitions.

A. Notwithstanding Chapter 37 (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.) of Title 2.2 or subsection B, it is unlawful for any court clerk to disclose the social security number or other identification numbers appearing on driver's licenses or other documents issued under Chapter 3 (§ 46.2-300 et seq.) of Title 46.2 or the comparable law of another jurisdiction or information on credit cards, debit cards, bank accounts, or other electronic billing and payment systems that was supplied to a court clerk for the purpose of paying fees, fines, taxes, or other charges collected by such court clerk. The prohibition shall not apply where disclosure of such information is required (i) to conduct or complete the transaction for which

such information was submitted or (ii) by other law or court order.

B. Beginning January 1, 2004, no court clerk shall post on the Internet any document that contains the following information: (i) an actual signature, (ii) a social security number, (iii) a date of birth identified with a particular person, (iv) the maiden name of a person's parent so as to be identified with a particular person, (v) any financial account number or numbers, or (vi) the name and age of any minor child.

C. Each such clerk shall post notice that includes a list of the documents routinely posted on its website. However, the clerk shall not post information on his website that includes private activity for private financial gain.

D. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit access to any original document as provided by law.

E. This section shall not apply to the following:

1. Providing access to any document among the land records via secure remote access pursuant to § 17.1-294;
2. Postings related to legitimate law-enforcement purposes;
3. Postings of historical, genealogical, interpretive, or educational documents and information about historic persons and events;
4. Postings of instruments and records filed or recorded that are more than 100 years old;
5. Providing secure remote access to any person, his counsel, or staff which counsel directly supervises to documents filed in matters to which such person is a party;
6. Providing official certificates and certified records in digital form of any document maintained by the clerk pursuant to § 17.1-258.3:2; and
7. Providing secure remote access to nonconfidential court records, subject to any fees charged by the clerk, to members in good standing with the Virginia State Bar and their authorized agents, pro hac vice attorneys authorized by the court for purposes of the practice of law, and such governmental agencies as authorized by the clerk.

F. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the Supreme Court or any other court clerk from providing online access to a case management system that may include abstracts of case filings and proceedings in the courts of the Commonwealth, including online access to subscribers of nonconfidential criminal case information to confirm the complete date of birth of a defendant.

G. The court clerk shall be immune from suit arising from any acts or omissions relating to providing remote access on the Internet pursuant to this section unless the clerk was grossly negligent or engaged in willful misconduct.

This subsection shall not be construed to limit, withdraw, or overturn any defense or immunity already existing in statutory or common law, or to affect any cause of action accruing prior to July 1, 2005.

H. Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit any data accessed by secure remote access to be sold or posted on any other website or in any way redistributed to any third party, and the clerk, in his discretion, may deny secure remote access to ensure compliance with these provisions. However, the data accessed by secure remote access may be included in products or services provided to a third party of the subscriber provided that (i) such data is not made available to the general public and (ii) the subscriber maintains administrative, technical, and security safeguards to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and limited availability of the data.

### § 17.1-293.1. (For contingent expiration date see cc. 524 and 542) Online case information system.

The Executive Secretary shall make available a publicly viewable online case information system of certain nonconfidential information entered into the case management system for criminal cases in the circuit courts participating in the Executive Secretary's case management system and in the general district courts. Such system shall be searchable by defendant name across all participating courts, and search results shall be viewable free of charge.

### § 17.1-293.1. (For contingent effective date see cc. 524 and 542) Online case information system; exceptions.

A. The Executive Secretary shall make available a publicly viewable online case information system of certain nonconfidential information entered into the case management system for criminal cases in the circuit courts participating in the Executive Secretary's case management system and in the general district courts. Such system shall be searchable by defendant name across all participating courts, and search results shall be viewable free of charge.

B. Upon entry of a sealing order pursuant to § 19.2-392.7, 19.2-392.8, 19.2-392.9, 19.2-392.11, or 19.2-392.12, the Executive Secretary shall not make any of-

fense that was ordered to be sealed available for online public viewing in an appellate court, circuit court, or district court case management system maintained by the Executive Secretary.

C. Upon entry of a sealing order pursuant to § 19.2-392.7, 19.2-392.8, 19.2-392.9, 19.2-392.11, or 19.2-392.12, any circuit court clerk who maintains a viewable online case management or case information system shall not make any offense that was ordered to be sealed available for online public viewing.

## § 17.1-294. Secure remote access to land records.

A. No circuit court clerk shall provide secure remote access to any land record that does not comply with the provisions of this section and the secure remote access standards developed by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency in consultation with the circuit court clerks, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court, the Compensation Board, and users of land and other court records.

B. 1. Beginning July 1, 2012, any land record made available to subscribers via secure remote access may contain only the last four digits of the social security number of any party. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to require the clerk to reinsert the last four digits of a social security number on any land record where the redaction of the entire social security number has been completed prior to July 1, 2012.

2. However, the original land record maintained by the clerk may contain a social security number if otherwise provided by law, but that original record shall not be made available via secure remote access unless it complies with this section.

3. Except in cases where the original record is required by law to contain a social security number, the attorney or party who prepares or submits the land record for recordation has the responsibility for ensuring that the social security number has been removed from the writing prior to the instrument's being submitted for recordation.

C. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit access to any original document as provided by law.

D. Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit any data accessed by secure remote access to be sold or posted on any other website or in any way redistributed to any third party, and the clerk, in his discretion, may deny secure remote access to ensure compliance with these provisions. However, the data accessed by secure remote access may be included in products or services provided to a third party of the subscriber provided that (i) such data is not made available to the general public and (ii) the subscriber maintains administrative, technical, and security safeguards to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and limited availability of the data.

E. The clerk of the circuit court of any jurisdiction shall be immune from suit arising from any acts or omissions relating to providing secure remote access to land records pursuant to this section unless the clerk was grossly negligent or engaged in willful misconduct.

## § 17.1-295. Definitions.

As used in this title:

"Confidential court records" means any civil or criminal record maintained by a clerk of the circuit court designated by this Code as confidential or any such record sealed pursuant to court order.

"Electronic filing of court records" means the networks or systems maintained by a clerk of the circuit court, or the clerk's designated application service providers, for the submittal of instruments for electronic filing of court records in accordance with this title, the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, and the secure remote access standards developed by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency.

"Electronic recording of land records" means the networks or systems maintained by a clerk of the circuit court, or the clerk's designated application service providers, for the submittal of instruments for electronic filing of land records in accordance with the provisions of Article 3 (§ 55.1-346 et seq.) of Chapter 3 of Title 55.1 regarding the satisfaction of mortgages, the Uniform Real Property Electronic Recording Act (§ 55.1-661 et seq.), and the provisions of this title.

"Operational expenses" means expenses of the clerk of court used to maintain the clerk's office and includes, but is not limited to, (i) computer support, maintenance, enhancements, upgrades, and replacements and office automation and information technology equipment, including software and conversion services; (ii) preserving, maintaining, and enhancing court records, including, but not limited to, the costs of repairs, maintenance, consulting services, service contracts, redaction of social security numbers from certain records, and system replacements or upgrades; and (iii) improving public access to records maintained by the clerk, including locating technology in an offsite facility for such purposes or for implementation of a disaster recovery plan.

"Public access" means that the clerk of the circuit court has made available to subscribers that are other

than governmental agencies, secure remote access to records maintained by the clerk in accordance with § 17.1-294.

"Secure remote access to court records" means public access by electronic means on a network or system to court records maintained by the clerk of the circuit court or the clerk's designated application service providers, in compliance with this title, the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, and the secure remote access standards developed by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency.

"Secure remote access to land records" means public access by electronic means on a network or system to land records maintained by the clerk of the circuit court or the clerk's designated application service providers, in compliance with the Secure Remote Access Standards developed by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency.

"Subscriber" means any person who has entered into a subscriber agreement with the clerk of the circuit court authorizing the subscriber to have secure remote access to land records or secure remote access to court records maintained by the clerk or the clerk's designated application service providers. If the subscriber is an entity with more than one person who will use the network or system to access land records maintained by the clerk, or the clerk's designated application service providers, each individual user shall execute a subscriber agreement and obtain a separate "user id" and "password" from the clerk. The subscriber is responsible for the fees due under this title and the proper use of the secure remote access system pursuant to the subscriber agreement, applicable Virginia law, and Secure Remote Access Standards developed by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency.

## Title 30, General Assembly, Chapter 21. Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council.

### § 30-178. Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council; membership; terms; quorum; expenses.

A. The Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council (the Council) is hereby created as an advisory council in the legislative branch to encourage and facilitate compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.).

B. The Council shall consist of 14 members as follows: the Attorney General or his designee; the Librarian of Virginia or his designee; the Director of the Division of Legislative Services or his designee; five members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates, two of whom shall be members of the House of Delegates, and three nonlegislative citizen members, at least one of whom shall be or have been a representative of the news media; four members appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, two of whom shall be members of the Senate, one of whom shall be or have been an officer of local government, and one nonlegislative citizen at-large member; and two nonlegislative citizen members appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall not be a state employee. The local government representative may be selected from a list recommended by the Virginia Association of Counties and the Virginia Municipal League, after due consideration of such list by the Senate Committee on Rules. The citizen members may be selected from a list recommended by the Virginia Press Association, the Virginia Association of Broadcasters, and the Virginia Coalition for Open Government, after due consideration of such list by the appointing authorities.

C. All appointments following the initial staggering of terms shall be for terms of four years, except that appointments to fill vacancies shall be for the unexpired terms in the same manner as the original appointment. No nonlegislative citizen member shall be eligible to serve for more than two successive four-year terms. At the end of a term, a nonlegislative citizen member shall continue to serve until a successor is appointed. However, after the expiration of a term of three years or less, or after the expiration of the remainder of a term to which appointed to fill a vacancy, two additional terms may be served by such member if appointed thereto. Legislative members and other state government officials shall serve terms coincident with their terms of office. Legislative members may be reappointed for successive terms.

D. The members of the Council shall elect from among their membership a chairman and a vice-chairman for two-year terms. The chairman and vice-chairman may not succeed themselves to the same position.

E. The Council shall hold meetings quarterly or upon the call of the chairman. A majority of the Council shall constitute a quorum. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection C, if any nonlegislative citizen member of the Council fails to attend a majority of meetings of the Council in a calendar year, the Council shall notify the member's appointing authority. Upon receipt of such notification, the appointing authority

may remove the member and appoint a successor as soon as practicable.

F. Members of the Council shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813, 2.2-2825 and 30-19.12, as appropriate. Funding for expenses of the members shall be provided from existing appropriations to the Council.

### § 30-179. Powers and duties of the Council. (Effective September 1, 2022)

The Council shall:

1. Furnish, upon request, advisory opinions or guidelines, and other appropriate information regarding the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.) to any person or public body, in an expeditious manner;

2. Conduct training seminars and educational programs for the members and staff of public bodies and other interested persons on the requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.);

3. Publish such educational materials as it deems appropriate on the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.);

4. Request from any public body such assistance, services, and information as will enable the Council to effectively carry out its responsibilities. Information provided to the Council by a public body shall not be released to any other party unless authorized by such public body;

5. Assist in the development and implementation of the provisions of § 2.2-3704.1;

6. Develop an online public comment form to be posted on the Council's official public government website to enable any requester to comment on the quality of assistance provided to the requester by a public body; and

7. Report annually on or before December 1 of each year on its activities and findings regarding the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.), including recommendations for changes in the law, to the General Assembly and the Governor. The annual report shall be published as a state document.

### § 30-180. Staff.

Staff assistance to the Council shall be provided by the Division of Legislative Services. Staff shall perform those duties assigned to it by the Council.

### § 30-181. Cooperation of agencies of state and local government.

Every department, division, board, bureau, commission, authority or political subdivision of the Commonwealth shall cooperate with, and provide such assistance to, the Council as the Council may request.

## Title 36. Housing, Chapter 6. Uniform Statewide Building Code

### § 36-105.3. Security of certain records.

Building Code officials shall institute procedures to ensure the safe storage and secure handling by local officials having access to or in the possession of engineering and construction drawings and plans containing critical structural components, security equipment and systems, ventilation systems, fire protection equipment, mandatory building emergency equipment or systems, elevators, electrical systems, telecommunications equipment and systems, and other utility equipment and systems submitted for the purpose of complying with the Uniform Statewide Building Code (§ 36-97 et seq.) or the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (§ 27-94 et seq.).

Further, information contained in engineering and construction drawings and plans for any single-family residential dwelling submitted for the purpose of complying with the Uniform Statewide Building Code (§ 36-97 et seq.) or the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (§ 27-94 et seq.) shall not be subject to disclosure under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.), except to the applicant or the owner of the property upon the applicant's or owner's request.

# Virginia Conflict of Interests Act

## Guide for Local Government Officials

### Introduction

The Virginia State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act ("COIA" or the "Act.") regulates the financial relationships of council members and mayors with their localities and with any other governmental agencies that are related to the local government. The Act is intended to be the sole body of law for governing city and town council members' financial involvement in contracts or other transactions with their own localities and with other governmental entities. While this Guide refers to city and town councils it is equally applicable to boards of supervisors and counties, along with regional bodies. Many of the Act's rules and restrictions also apply to other officers and employees of local governments, including locally elected constitutional officers.

COIA regulates how involved a council member may be in an item being considered by council if the member has a financial interest in that item. The Act also defines what constitutes bribery or taking unfair advantage of information gained by reason of being on council. It sets penalties for violations and provides a procedural framework for its enforcement.

The Act is codified in Title 2.2, Chapter 31 of the Code of Virginia, § 2.2-3100 and following. While this Guide describes the general operation of the law, the reader should consult the law's specific language for a better understanding (code references are given throughout this Guide). Furthermore, a council member with questions about a contract or transaction should consult the city or town attorney for the member's locality.

The 2014 General Assembly created the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council ("COIA Council") to review and post online disclosure forms filed by officials who are subject to the Act. The Advisory Council also issues formal opinions about specific conflicts and offers informal advice, education and training. The duties and responsibilities of the Advisory Council are discussed throughout this Guide.

Since the Council was created many changes to the law have occurred as the General Assembly tries to strike a balance between the need for disclosure and the practicality of complying with the law. For instance, the forms were originally supposed to be filed semi-annually but now must be filed annually. The definition of what constitutes a permissible or impermissible gift and how to include family members' interests have also been the subject of many changes to this law.

Your locality's attorney is a primary source of advice about application of the Act, but the locality's Commonwealth Attorney and the Advisory Council are also good resources, and in some circumstances their opinions provide legal protection from prosecution for violations of the Act.

### Purpose of the act

The first section of the act, Va. Code § 2.2-3100, sets out the purpose of the law, citing three main goals:

1. To help ensure that the government will fully represent the public in its operations;
2. To give citizens confidence in public officials and the government so they will trust the government, by creating a clear set of rules for government officials; and,
3. To assemble all the laws affecting conflict of interests in a single location in order to create uniform rules. (While COIA largely accomplishes this purpose, additional rules are stated in the Virginia Public Procurement Act and in various other code sections.).

The act contains three general areas of regulation (listed below). The act also has procedural, enforcement, and penalty provisions.

### Areas of regulation

The Act regulates the financial relationships of council members with their localities in three general categories:

1. General provisions covering bribes and other illegal behavior.
2. Regulation of financial interests a council member or other officer or employee may have in business dealings with his or her locality or with

agencies related to his or her locality. The Act calls this a personal interest in a contract.

3. Regulation of the level of involvement a council member, officer or employee of a locality may have in an item being considered by the locality that involves the official's business, property or other personal financial interest. The Act calls this a personal interest in a transaction.

# I. Generally Prohibited Conduct

## Bribes and other illegal behavior

Section § 2.2-3103 prohibits public officials from taking or soliciting bribes and from allowing money to influence their actions. This section applies to a person's actions as a government official; COIA does not apply to private individuals or businesses that may offer the bribes. Their actions are governed by other provisions in the state criminal code.

The Act prohibits a council member from soliciting or accepting money or benefits for doing his or her work as a public official. § 2.2-3103(1). For example, a council member may not take money (other than a properly reported campaign contribution) for voting in favor of a rezoning to help a developer build a project. Similarly, council members may not offer or take money to get a government job offer for themselves or for someone else, or in exchange for obtaining a contract or business deal with the local government. §§ 2.2-3103(1) & 3103(2).

A knowing violation of these prohibitions is a Class 1 misdemeanor. Enforcement and penalties for COIA vio;ations are discussed in greater detail later is this Guide.

## Undue influence

One step below the outright bribery rule is the prohibition on taking certain gifts or opportunities while serving as a public official. §§ 2.2-3103(5), (6), (8), (9) &

2.2-3103.1. The act prohibits a council member from accepting money, loans, gifts, services, business oppor- tunities, or other benefits if it is reasonable to construe that the benefit was given to influence the council member in his or her duties. An exception is made for political campaign contributions – but only if the contribution is used for a political campaign or constituent service purposes and is reported as required by to the campaign disclosure laws.

A typical example of this issue for cities and towns occures when a vendor or contractor gives Christmas gifts of sub- stantial value to the members of council. Whether the gift complies with the act is a judgment call in most cases. Is a Christmas turkey reasonable if the developer is also giving the same gift to his employees, his busi- ness associates, and his materials suppliers? What if the gift is a box of cookies for the whole staff ? The circumstances of the specific case usually indicate whether the gifts are appropriate.

The following items are exempted from the prohibition on gifts: (1) coupons and tickets that are not used; (2) honorary degrees; (3) scholarships or financial aid awards that were awarded in the same manner as they would be to the general public; (4) campaign contributions that are properly received and reported; (5) a gift that relates to the private profession or volunteer service of the officer or a member of the officer's immediate family; (6) food or beverages consumed while attending an event at which the filer is performing official duties related to public service, (7) food or beverages received at or registration of attendance fees waived for any event at which the filer is a featured speaker, presenter, or lecturer, (8) unsolicited awards of appreciation or recognition; (9) a devise or inheritance; (10) travel disclosed under the Campaign Finance Disclosure Act (§24.2-945 et seq.); (11) travel paid for or provided by a government entity; (12) travel provided to facilitate attendance by a legislator at a regular or special session of General Assembly or other meeting approved by the House or Senate Committee on Rules; (13) travel related to an official meeting of, or any meal provided for attendance at such meeting by, the Commonwealth, political subdivisions, or any board, commission, authority, or other entity, or any charitable organization established pursuant to §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code affiliated with such entity, to which such person has been appointed or elected or is a member by virtue of his office or employment; (14) gifts with a value less than $20; (15) attendance at a reception or similar function where food, such as hors d'oeuvres, and beverages that can be conveniently consumed by a person while standing or walking are offered; or (16) gifts from relatives or personal friends as the Act defines "personal friend". § 2.2-3101. Overturning an Advisory opinion from the Council, the General Assembly has changed the definition of gift and does NOT include tickets or registration or admission fees to an event that are provided by an agency to its own officers or employees for the purposes of performing official duties related to their public service!

For purposes of §2.2-3101 and what is not a gift when received from a relative, that term is defined as the recipient's spouse, child, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, or first cousin; a person whom the donee is engaged to marry, the recipient or recipient's spouse's parent,

grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, step-parent, step-grandparent, step-grandchild, step- brother, or step-sister or the recipient's brother's or sister's spouse or the recipient's son-in-law or daughter-in-law.

The Act limits who can be considered a personal friend for the purposes of the disclosure exemption. The reason for this limitation is to ensure that the term "personal friend" is not applied loosely, allowing anyone's gift to qualify for the exemption from disclosure by the recipient. Personal friends are discussed further below.

§ 2.2-3103.1 pertains to prohibited gifts. This provision applies to all candidates, officers, and employees of local governments and advisory agencies, and members of their immediate family. These individuals may not solicit, accept or receive a tangible gift that is valued at over $108 or a combination of gifts within a year with an aggregate value of over $108 if it is given to him by (1) a lobbyist, (2) a lobbyist's principal,[1] or (3) a person, organization, or business that is seeking to be or already is a party to a contract with the local agency of which he is an officer or employee. However, the limit only applies to individuals who are required to file a disclosure form prescribed in §2.2-3117. Therefore, it does not apply to officials of localities with a population under 3,500.

An official may accept a gift with a value in excess of $108 if the gift was from a personal friend. The following factors will be considered in determining whether someone qualifies as a personal friend: (a) the circumstances under which the gift was offered; (b) the history of the relationship, to include its nature, duration and previous gift exchanges; (c) to the extent known, whether the donor personally paid for the gift or sought a tax de- duction or business reimbursement and (d) whether the donor has given similar gifts to other persons required to file disclosure forms. §2.2-3103.1.

A lobbyist or a lobbyist's principal cannot, however be considered a personal friend whose gifts are exempt from these limits. A person, organization, or business also cannot be considered a personal friend if that entity or person is a party to a contract with the local government or agency for which the officer or employee works. This is true whether the contract has already been awarded or if the person, organization, or business is just seeking to be a party to a contract.

Some may wonder how an officer or official would even try to argue that he or she has a personal friendship with an organization or business. In this context, the terms "organization" and "business" include those who are officers, directors, owners, or have a controlling ownership interest in the organization or business. § 2.2-3101.

Council members are also prohibited from taking benefits if they know the benefits are being offered to influ- ence the member's decision or vote. § 2.2-3103(5). Therefore, even if the gift is not unreasonable, the council member may not accept it if the circumstances or statements of the giver make it clear that the gift is being given to influence the council member.

A further prohibition is aimed at gifts given by a private party looking for a specific action by the government. § 2.2-3103(8). This subsection prohibits a council member from accepting a gift from a private party whose interests can be affected by the council member's actions, where the timing of the gift would lead a reasonable person to question whether the gift is being given to influence the council member. For example, if the day before an important council vote on a rezoning, the applicant for that rezoning gives the council member $2,000 and calls it a campaign contribution, it would be reasonable to think the money was given to influence the vote. Also, if a council member accepts gifts so often that it creates the appearance that he or she routinely accepts gifts simply for doing his or her job, that behavior constitutes a violation. § 2.2-3103(9). Viola- tions of these two prohibitions may not be the basis for a criminal charge.

Why is the gift limit $108? the Council is empowered every 5 years to adjust this amount for inflation. In 2020 they raised the original $100 limit to $108.

## Local governments can adopt ordinance limiting dollar value of gifts

Local governments may adopt an ordinance to limit the dollar value of gifts to officials and employees of the locality. § 2.2-3104.2. The ordinance can include a required gift disclosure provision. While a public official may have nothing to fear legally once a gift is disclosed, keep in mind that the appearance of impropriety is often more harmful than the impropriety itself. A $50 limit is often used. While this amount is arbitrary, setting a limit does make it simpler for all involved to know what behavior is permissible. Even if the locality adopted an ordinance prohibiting acceptance of gifts over a fixed

[1]Prior to the General Assembly overturning the Advisory opinion from the Council, the elected members of a locality were to follow the restrictions and reporting requirements provided for in the Act whenever they received any gifts from lobbyist's principals. This applied even in circumstances where the lobbyist's principal was their own locality, and the locality was giving them a gift, distinct from their regular compensation. 2020-F-001 (November 18, 2020).

amount, its officers or employees may accept a gift of greater value given by a §501(c)(3) charitable organization in recognition of the recipient's meritorious public service.

### Insider information

It is a violation of the Act for a public official to use information not available to the public for his or her own or another person's economic benefit. § 2.2-3103(4). For council members, a violation of this prohibition is sometimes alleged unfairly. For example, a council member who simply pays attention to plans submitted to the locality that are available to the public, and then buys a nearby property, has not violated the Act, but the public may still believe that the council member had advance knowledge of the business opportunity. Once again, the perception may be more problematic than the reality.

## II. Regulation of council member's actions as a citizen.

### Personal interest in a contract.

The Act limits what financial interests a council member may have in business dealings with his or her locality and with agencies related to his or her locality. § 2.2-3107. The Act calls this a "personal interest in a contract." While this Guide's discussion is limited to the restrictions on council members, the Act also sets forth different restrictions for school board members (§ 2.2-3108) and for local government employees (§ 2.2-3109). Council members need to keep in mind the restrictions on the employees of a city or town as they carry out their duties and watch over the affairs of the locality.

According to § 2.2-3107(A), "no person elected or appointed as a member of the governing body of a county, city or town" shall have "a personal interest in a contract" with his or her city or town or with certain other related government agencies. (The definition of a per- sonal interest in a contract is described below.)

The council member may not have a personal interest in a contract with any agency of his or her locality, including the operating departments of the city or town. In addition, he or she may not have a personal interest in a contract with any government agency that is under the council's ultimate control. For example, if the council appoints a library board, then council members would have ultimate control over the library. Therefore, a council member could not have a financial interest in a contract with the library board. In a city where the school board is appointed by the city council, council members would likewise be prohibited from having an interest in a contract with the school system.

This section of the Act also prohibits involvement in a contract with any agency if the council appoints a majority of the members of that agency's govern- ing body. For example, if the locality is a member of a regional jail and its council appoints four of the jail board's seven members, then a council member would be prohibited from being involved in a contract with the jail.

### Definitions of personal interest and personal interest in a contract, and personal interest in a transaction

The Act only prohibits a council member's participation if he or she has a personal interest in the contract with one of the agencies described. The definition of "personal interest in a contract" has three parts: "a personal interest," a "personal interest in a transaction" and a "personal interest in a contract." § 2.2-3101.

Personal interest. The definition of a personal interest is the key building block of the Act. The term is used throughout. A personal interest exists if any one of the following tests is met:

1. The council member owns at least 3 percent of the equity of a business.
2. The council member has annual income from a business that is or reasonably could be in excess of $5,000 or owns an interest in property worth more than $5000.
3. The council member has a salary, fringe benefits,or other compen- sation, from a business, or gets rent or other benefits from the use of property involved in a contract or transaction that exceeds or reasonably could exceed $5,000 annually.
4. The council member's ownership interest in property exceeds $5,000.
5. The council member's liability for a business exceeds 3 percent of the equity of the business.
6. The council member has an option on real property and, upon exercise of the option, his or her ownership will meet the levels in either test 1 or 4, above.

***Immediate Family.*** In addition to the council member, if any person in the council member's immediate family has one of the six types of a personal inter- est, the personal interest exists for the council member. The term "immediate family" always includes

the person's spouse. The term also includes any other person who resides in the same household as the officer or employee and who is a dependent of the officer or employee.

As this definition demonstrates, if a council member's spouse has a personal interest in a business that would like to contract with the city, the contract is prohibited even though the husband/council member has no involvement in the contracts.

***Personal Interest in a transaction.*** A personal interest in a transaction exists when an officer or employee or immediate family member of one has a personal interest in property or a business and that property or business is:

1. The subject of the transaction, or.
2. The member or or the property or business in which the member has an interest may realize a reasonably foreseeable direct or indirect benefit or detriment as a result of the action of the member's agency considering the transaction.

A personal interest in a transaction does not exist when:

1. An elected member of a local governing body serves without renumeration as a member of the board of trustees of a not-for-profit entity and the mem- ber and his immediate family has no personal interest in the entity.
2. An officer, employee, or elected member of a local governing body is appointed by such local governing body to serve on a governmental agency and the personal interest in the transaction is the result of benefits provided to the member or his immediate family.

***Personal interest in a contract.*** If the council mem- ber's involvement meets any one of the six definitions of a personal interest, the next step is determining whether the council member has a personal interest in the contract in question. According to the Act's definition, a council member has a personal interest in a contract with a government agency if that contract is with the council member or with a business in which he or she has a personal interest. § 2.2-3101.

In looking at a particular contract, it is important to ask: Is a council member or his or her business or property involved in the contract? Does that council member have a personal interest as defined by the Act? The answers to these questions will help determine if the contract is prohibited under the Act.

## Situations where conflicts do not exist

Some situations are not legally defined as conflicts under the Act, even though they may appear to be natural conflicts. If a council member earns a total salary of $4,900 per year from a business, that business could contract with the locality, because the council member would not meet the income level to have a personal interest for purposes of the Act. As the third test of the definition – salary – shows, the salary must exceed $5,000 per year to create a personal interest.

Note also that an official's personal interest in a contract or transaction is based only on the official's financial interest. If a council member serves on the board of a charitable entity, the fact that the council member may have divided loyalties between the charity and the locality, or may support the policy goals of the charity does not create a legal conflict under the Act, as long as the council member serves on the charity's board for less than $5,000 compensation per year and doesn't have an ownership interest in the charity. § 2.2-3101.

## Exceptions to conflicts in contracts

The Act sets out a series of exceptions to the prohibitions on having a personal interest in a contract.

Exceptions that apply only to council members. Several exceptions are specific to council members. § 2.2-3107(B).

1. A council member may be an employee of the locality as long as the employment began before the member's election to council. § 2.2-3107(B)(1). This section of the law also allows employment and service on council if the person was an employee prior to July 1, 1983. If an employee of locality serves on council, he or she will sometimes run into potential conflicts when matters come before council that affect the locality's employees such as salary and disciplinary decisions. (This issue is explored below, in the section on personal interests in a transaction).

2. A council member may buy goods or services from his or her locality as long as they are made available to the public at uniform prices. § 2.2-3107(B)(2).

3. A council member may sell goods to his or her locality if the following conditions are met, pursuant to § 2.2-3107(B)(3):

a. The purchase must be made by competitive sealed bidding. Therefore, if the contract is being solicited by a request for proposals, the exception doesn't apply.

b. The contract must be for goods, not services, and the need for the goods must have been

established prior to the person's coming on council.

For example if the city needs a tractor, and a council member owns a tractor dealership, if the city had bought tractors prior to the council member's election, the member's dealership may continue to bid on the contract.

c. The council member who wants to sell to the locality must play no role in preparing the specifications for the purchase.

d. The remaining members of council must pass a resolution in writing that the council member's bidding on the contract is in the public interest.

**Note:** this exception does not apply to providing services, only to contracts for buying goods. For example, a council member who is an accountant, or the member's firm may not have a contract to provide auditing services to the member's locality.

## Eight exceptions that apply to all local government officials and employees.

The following eight exceptions to the prohibition on having a personal interest in a contract apply not only to council members, but to all other local government officials and employees as well. § 2.2-3110(A).

1. Any sale, lease, or exchange of real property between a local official and his or her locality is allowed as long as the official doesn't participate on behalf of the locality in making the deal, and the fact that the official wasn't involved is recorded in the public record of the locality or governmental agency involved in the transaction. The reason for this exception is that each parcel of real estate is deemed to be unique. If a city needs a certain lot or parcel, the fact that a council member or city employee owns it should not prevent the purchase of the needed land by the city. § 2.2-3110(A)(1).

2. The prohibition does not apply to contracts for the publication of official notices, presumably so that the local newspaper may be used for ads required by state law even when a council member is an owner or employee of that paper. This is a balancing of needs; the state code requires many local government notices to be run in the local paper. Without this exception, those publication requirements could not be met in such a situation. § 2.2-3110(A)(2).

3. For counties, towns and cities with a population under 10,000 contracts between a council member and his or her locality are allowed, despite the general prohibition, if the total of those contracts does not exceed $5,000 per year. Further, contracts up to $25,000 are allowed if the contract is awarded by competitive sealed bidding. This higher level only applies if the public official has filed a statement of economic interests form. Every council member except those in localities with populations of 3,500 and under must file that form annually, so this requirement does not create an added obligation. § 2.2-3110(A)(3).

4. If the sole personal interest a local official has in a contract comes from employment by the contracting business for more than $5,000 per year the business may still be able to contract with the locality. For this exception to apply, neither the local official nor any member of his or her immediate family may have any authority to participate in making the deal with the locality, and must not actually participate on behalf of either the business or the locality in negotiating the deal. A typical example of this might be a contract with a large engineering firm that employs a council member but the member or member's spouse plays no role in soliciting the contract or negotiating its terms. § 2.2-3110(A)(4).

5. If a council member is employed by a public service corporation, a bank, a savings and loan association, or a public utility, and the member discloses that employment and refrains from participating on behalf of the city or town, then the utility, bank, etc., may contract with the locality. § 2.2-3110(A)(6). Without this exception, all employees of the local electric power company or local bank might effectively be barred from seeking public office in the locality.

6. The prohibition does not apply to any contract for goods or services below $500 in value. But if a locality normally purchased paper on an annual contract, for example, could it split up a year's worth of paper contracts so that each is less than $500? While the section is silent on splitting up a larger contract to meet this exception, the consensus is that splitting a contract solely to evade the $500 limit would violate the law. § 2.2-3110(A)(7).

7. Program grants made to a local public official are allowed if the rates or amounts paid to all qualified applicants are uniform and are established solely by the agency administering the grants. § 2.2-3110(A)(8).

8. If the spouse of a local official is employed by the locality, the personal interest prohibition does not apply if the spouse was employed by the agency five or more years prior to marrying the other official. § 2.2-3110(A)(9). If one spouse is the supervisor of the other spouse, the conflict does not exist if the subordi- nate spouse earns less than $35,000 per year. § 2.2-3110(B).

# III. Council member's participation as public official

## Personal interest in a transaction

The rule concerning a personal interest in a trans- action sets out the level of involvement a council member may have in an item being considered by the governing body (the transaction) that involves the membership, property, or other personal financial interest. § 2.2-3112.

As with a personal interest in a contract, the first step is to determine whether the council member has a personal interest in the transaction. The same definition of a personal interest is used in the transactions provisions as in the contracts provisions, but the definition of personal interest in a transaction goes beyond the definition of a personal interest in a contract.

## Definition of transaction & personal interest in a transaction

***Transaction.*** In the context of a city or town council, a transaction is defined as any matter considered by the council, a council committee or subcommittee, or any department, agency, or board of the locality Including the local planning commission, if any official action is taken or is being contemplated. § 2.2-3101.

***Personal interest in a transaction.*** This term is broadly defined as a personal interest of a council member "in any matter considered by his [locality]". § 2.2-3101. Specifically, a personal interest in a transaction exists if a council member or immediate family member has a personal interest (as defined in Part II) in the property, business, or governmental agency – or represents/provides services to any individual or business property – and the property, business, or represented/served individual or business either (1) is the subject of the transaction, or (2) may realize a reasonably foreseeable benefit or detriment as the result of the transaction.

A typical example of representing or servicing an individual or business would be a council member who is an accountant and whose accounting firm handles the books of the business that is the subject of the transaction. Another common example occurs when the council member or member's spouse is a principal in an engineering firm that represents an applicant for a land-use permit before council. In these cases, the council member may well have a personal interest in the transaction unless he or she is not directly involved in the representation. In practice, if a matter comes before council or a council committee or involves any department of the locality, and a council member has a personal interest in the subject matter or represents the subject business, the council member must then follow the Act's requirements for his or her participation in § 2.2-3112 (discussed below in "Levels of transactions" section).

## Exceptions and limitation on conflicts

A personal interest in a transaction does not exist if the council member serves on a not-for-profit board without pay, and neither the council member nor his or her immediate family has a financial interest in the not-for-profit entity (Definition of personal interest in §2.2-3101).

No prohibited personal interest exists when an employee or council member of a locality is appointed by the locality to an ex-officio role in another governmental agency and the appointee's interest in the transaction exists solely due to the locality's employment of the appointee or appointee's spouse. See the definition of "personal interest in a transaction" in § 2.2-3101.

The Act provides in § 2.2-3112(C) that if an employee, but not a council member, is disqualified from participating in a transaction, the employee may still represent his private interests before the council as long as the employee is not paid for the representation and discloses the nature of his or her interest. This exception appears not to apply to council members.

## Other employees

Section §2.2-3112 sets out the rules for a locality's employees other than council members who have a personal interest in a transaction with the locality. The section also contains a list of exceptions that apply to the employees of the government agencies in the locality. Those rules and exceptions do not apply to council members. For example, an employee's spouse may contract with the locality to provide services (for example, accounting) if certain conditions are met. In contrast, a council member's spouse could not have a contract for the same services to the locality.

## Levels of transactions

The fact that a council member has a personal interest in a transaction before council does not always require the member to disqualify himself. The Act's requirements for participation, if a personal interest in the transaction does exist, set out three levels of transactions. § 2.2-3112(B).

1. If the council member is in a firm that represents the subject of the transaction, but the council member does not personally represent the subject in the trans-

ac- tion, the member may participate in the council discussion after making the declaration requirements of § 2.2-3114(G) or §2.2-3115(I).

2. If the transaction affects a business, profession, occupation or group of three or more members to which the council member belongs, he may participate in the transaction only if he completes a disclosure form, described in the "Disclosures" section, below. § 2.2-3112(B)(2).

3. If the transaction affects the public generally, the council member may participate. A council member may, for example, obviously vote on raising property taxes, even though that vote affects the member, because it also affects the public generally. In comparing items 2 and 3, some transactions are considered to affect the public generally, even though not every member of the public is affected. For example, the business license tax applies only to property owners, but it is considered to affect the general public.

### Additional exception

Disqualification under the provisions of § 2.23112(C) does not prevent any employee who has a personal interest in a transaction with his or her agency from representing himself, herself, or immediate family members in such transaction provided the employee does not receive compensation for such representation and complies with the disqualification and relevant disclosure requirements of the Act.

### Effects of disqualification

If a council member is disqualified from participating in a transaction, the Act requires several steps. § 2.2-3112:

1. The council member must disclose the interest that causes the disqualification by identifying the interest, including the name and address of the business or property. § 2.2-3115(F). The disclosure is required whether the law requires the disqualification or the council member voluntarily disqualifies himself out of an abundance of caution. The disclosure can be made in a written record sent to the Clerk or made verbally in a public meeting and recorded in the minutes of that meeting.
2. The disclosure must be kept for five years in the records of the council.
3. The council member may not vote on or participate in discussion on the transaction. It is a best practice for the council member to sit in the audience during the discussion and vote, on a matter for which the member has been disqualified
4. The disqualified council member may not attend the portion of a closed meeting at which the transaction is discussed.
5. The disqualified council member may not discuss the matter with other members or with anyone in the local government who is involved in the transaction.

### Savings clause for certain votes

The Act allows the remainder of council to vote when disqualifications rob the council of a quorum. § 2.2-3112(D). The council may act by a vote of the majority of the members who are not disqualified. Even if the law requires a unanimous vote, it only has to be by a unanimous vote of the remaining members. The Advisory Council issued a formal advisory opinion (2017-F-001) on April 24, 2017 confirming the quorum analysis above. The opinion states in part that when five members of a seven member board are in attendance and two persons are disqualified from voting, the three remaining members do constitute a quorum. One caution – the Virginia Supreme Court has ruled that when there are disqualifications, and a vote is taken using this section, the disqualified members of council must remain present to maintain a quorum. If the disqualified members leave the meeting, such that fewer members are present than required for a quorum – a quorum does not exist and the meeting cannot continue. See Jakabcin v. Front Royal, 271 Va. 660, 628 S.E.2d 319 (2006).

In order for a council to sell or lease land, state law requires a three-fourths vote of all members elected to council. § 15.2-2100. § 2.2-3112(D) of the Act allows a council member to participate in a discussion and vote on a proposed sale, lease, or similar conveyance of land, if the council member's only personal interest in that sale is that he or she is employed by the business that is contracting with the locality for the land deal.

## IV. Disclosures

If a transaction affects a group, business, or profession as set forth in § 2.2-3112(B)(1), the council member may participate if he or she certifies in good faith that he or she can represent the public fairly in the transaction. The certification requires the following elements to be identified - § 2.2-3115(H):

- The transaction;
- The nature of the personal interest;

- The fact that the council member is a member of a business, profession, occupation, or group that will be affected by the transaction;
- A statement that the council member is able to participate fairly, objectively, and in the public interest.

If the transaction affects a party that the council member's firm represents, but the council member is not involved on behalf of the firm, the disclosure requires the following elements to be identified. § 2.2-3115(I):

- The transaction involved;
- The fact that a party to the transaction is a client of the council member's firm;
- A statement that the council member does not personally represent the client;
- A statement that the council member is able to participate fairly, objectively, and in the public interest.

If either of these disclosures is required, the council member must either state it at the meeting or file it in writing with the clerk of the council or the manager. A written disclosure should be filed before the meeting or, if that is impracticable, by the end of the following business day. § 2.2-3115(H), (I). In both cases, the disclosure is public. VML advises that it is better to make the disclosure at the meeting, orally, when the transaction is about to be considered. It is also recommended that the person sit in the audience for the discussion and vote. This conveys a clearer message of self-disqualification than simply handing the clerk a written statement. If the disqualification is handed in with no announcement, the public will wonder why the council member is not participating.

## Annual Statement of Economic Interests Form

In addition to transaction-specific disclosures, each council member of every locality with a population of more than 3,500 must file the Statement of Economic Interests form. The Statement of Economic Interests form must be filed annually on or before February 1st for the preceding calendar year. § 2.2-3115.

This disclosure form will be created and provided by the Advisory Council at least 30 days prior to the filing deadline. Forms should be disseminated by the clerks of the governing bodies to their respective members not less than 20 days before the filing deadline. The forms must be available for review by the public no later than six weeks after the deadline and shall be maintained in the clerk's of- fice for five years. §2.2-3115(D).

The forms will require the disclosure of holdings in excess of $5,000, which is a change from the previous threshold of $10,000. § 2.2-3117.

The city or town council may also adopt an ordinance to require other officials and employees of the locality to file the Statement of Economic Interests form pursuant to § 2.2-3115(A). Typically, this provision is used for the city or town manager, but some localities require various other employees to file the form. Other localities do not require the form to be completed by any employees or officials except those required to file by state law. The council also may require members of boards, commissions and councils whom it appoints to file a disclosure form. § 2.2-3115(B).

In localities with a population of more than 3,500, members of planning commissions, boards of zoning appeals, real estate assessors, and all county, city and town managers must file an annual disclosure that is limited real estate interests. § 2.2-3115(G).

The section clarifies that no local government officer or employee is required to file any disclosures not specifically mentioned in the article. § 2.2-3115(C).

## Who Files Disclosure Form

The following local officials are required to file the State and Local Statement of Economic Interests per § 2.2-3115:

- Members of the board of supervisors
- Members of the city council
- Members of the town council, if the town has a population exceeding 3,500
- Members of a school board
- Members and the executive director of any industrial development authority or economic development Authority
- Citizen members of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
- Persons holding positions of trust appointed or employed by the governing body if the governing body has passed an ordinance requiring them to file
- Persons holding positions of trust appointed or employed by school board if the school board has adopted a policy requiring them to file
- Members of the governing body of any entity established in a county or city with the power to issue bonds or expend funds in excess of $10,000 in any fiscal year if the governing body of the

appointing jurisdiction has required them to submit this form

The following local officials are required to file the Financial Disclosure Statement per § 2.2-3115:

- Members of the governing body of any entity established in a county or city with the power to issue bonds or expend funds in excess of $10,000 in any fiscal year unless required to file the Statement of Economic Interest by the governing body of the appointing jurisdiction
- Non-salaried citizen members of local boards, commissions, and councils if the governing body has designated them to file.

The following local officials are required to file the Real Estate Disclosure per § 2.2-3115 (G):

- Planning commission members
- Members of board of zoning appeals
- Real estate assessors
- County, city, or town managers
- Executive officers

*Nothing precludes a locality from requiring others to file.

## V. Enforcement & penalties

### Criminal penalties

A knowing violation of COIA is a Class 1 misdemeanor. § 2.2-3120. According to the Act, a violation is knowingly made if an official acts or refuses to act when he or she knows that the behavior is either prohibited or required by the Act. An example of refusing to do a required act is a council member's refusal to file a disclosure form. A Class 1 misdemeanor has maximum penalties of one year in jail and a fine of $2,500.

Three other specific violations have a lower, Class 3 penalty (maximum $500 fine):

1. Failure to disqualify oneself from participating in a transaction.
2. Failure to file the annual statement of economic interests.
3. Failure to file the statement of reasons for a disqualification in a transaction.

### Additional consequences for violations

In addition to the criminal consequences, a council member who is found guilty of a knowing COIA violation is also guilty of malfeasance in office. In that case, the judge may order the forfeiture of the member's council seat. § 2.2-3122.

If a contract is made by a locality is found to involve either a council member who violated the general provisions relating to bribes, insider information, undue influence (§ 2.2-3103), or a violation of the "personal interest in a contract" provisions, the council may rescind the contract. In that case, a contractor, even if innocent of wrongdoing, may not receive the full profits he anticipated in the deal. The contractor may only receive a "reasonable value," according to § 2.2-3123.

If a council action involves a violation of "the personal interest in a transaction" requirements, the council may rescind the award of a contract or other decision made. In rescinding the action, the best interests of the locality and any third parties are to be considered. § 2.2-3112(D).

If a council member violates any of the general provisions related to bribes and other illegal behavior, the rules regarding personal interest in a contract, or the rules regarding personal interest in a transaction, any value the member received from the transaction must be forfeited. If the violation was knowingly made, the judge may impose a civil penalty equal to the value received. §2.2-3124.

Any person required to file a disclosure form shall be entitled to an extension of the time limit for good cause shown. Good cause includes (i) the death of a relative, (ii) a state emergency declared by the Governor or by the President of the United States or a governor of another state if such emergency interferes with the timely filing of disclosure forms, (iii) being a member of a uniformed service and on active duty on the date of the filing deadline, or (iv) failure of the electronic filing system. § 30-356.2(A).

If a person is unable to timely file the disclosure form because it was not made available until after the deadline, the person shall receive a five-day extension upon request. The head of the agency for which the person works or the clerk of the governing body of the locality responsible for providing the disclosure form to such person shall be assessed a civil penalty in the amount equal to $250. If the disclosure form is provided to the person within three days prior to the filing deadline, the person shall receive a three-day extension upon request and no civil penalties will be assessed against the head of such person's agency or the clerk. § 30-356.2(B). This does not apply to statements of economic interest required to be filed as requirement of candidacy. § 30-356.2(C).

## Advisory opinions

### Commonwealth's Attorney

The law allows some opportunity to avoid a problem by setting up a process for a local official to obtain an opinion a COIA question from the local commonwealth's attorney. The commonwealth's attorney is required by § 2.2-3126(B) to issue advisory opinions on whether a fact situation constitutes a violation. In addition to issuing opinions, the commonwealth's attorney is charged with prosecuting violations of the Act by local officials. If the council member gives the attorney all the relevant facts and the attorney determines that the council member is allowed by law to participate, the council member may not be prosecuted for doing so. § 2.2-3121(B). If the commonwealth's attorney opines that the facts constitute a violation, the council member then may ask the attorney general to review and override the local opinion. The law makes it clear that any written opinions are public records and are therefore available to the public.

If the council member obtains a written opinion from the town or city attorney, based on full disclosure of the facts, the council member may introduce the favorable opinion from the attorney upon challenge. § 2.2-3121(C). However, keep in mind that the town or city attorney cannot provide the legal protection from prosecution for a violation that the Commonwealth's Attorney or the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council are legally authorized to grant.

### The Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is another resource that may be used to help localities and local officials avoid a conflicts of interest or ethics problem. It has the authority to issue formal advisory opinions and guidelines relating to ethics and conflicts issues. Additionally, the Council may issue informal advice in response to specific questions. Any informal advice issued by the Advisory Council is protected by attorney-client privilege and is exempt from disclosure under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. However, if the recipient invokes the immunity provisions of §2.2-3121 or §30-124, the record of the request and the informal advice shall be deemed to be a public record and released upon request.

Formal advisory opinions can be found on the Advisory Council website along with the adopted procedures for issuing formal advisory opinions. Formal opinions are public records, but may have some personal information redacted.

Another role of the Advisory Council is to provide training on ethics and conflicts issues. These training seminars will be available to lobbyists, state and local govern- ment officers and employees, legislators, and other in- terested persons. The written materials for these training sessions will also be published by the Council, when it is deemed appropriate. § 30-356(7), (9).

## Summary

The Virginia State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act determines when public officials and employees have personal interests in public contracts or transactions, if those interests conflict with the officials' public duties, and how the officials should behave considering such a conflict. The Act dictates the terms for disclosure of public officials' personal and financial interests and decides when officials must disqualify themselves from participating in a public business transaction. The Act also defines other types of conduct that public officials are prohibited from engaging in, including involvement in bribery, influence peddling, or misuse of insider information.

Council members should always consult the Act's specific language when a potential conflict seems possible. Inquiries about specific contracts or transactions should be directed first to the local city or town attorney. However, keep in mind that the town or city attorney cannot provide the legal protection from possible prosecution that the Commonwealth's Attorney or the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council can. We hope this Guide will help local governments become better informed of their responsibilities and how to recognize when a prospective conflict may occur.

# Title 2.2. Administration of Government. Chapter 31. State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act

As required under Virginia Code § 2.2-3100.1, …" All officers and employees shall read and familiarize themselves with the provisions of this chapter."

The text of the Act follows to assist local officials in complying with this section of the law.

Additional Code sections that deal with conflicts but that are in other chapters of the Code are included as well.

## Article 1. General Provisions.

### § 2.2-3100. Policy; application; construction.

The General Assembly, recognizing that our system of representative government is dependent in part upon (i) citizen legislative members representing fully the public in the legislative process and (ii) its citizens maintaining the highest trust in their public officers and employees, finds and declares that the citizens are entitled to be assured that the judgment of public officers and employees will be guided by a law that defines and prohibits inappropriate conflicts and requires disclosure of economic interests. To that end and for the purpose of establishing a single body of law applicable to all state and local government officers and employees on the subject of conflict of interests, the General Assembly enacts this State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act so that the standards of conduct for such officers and employees may be uniform throughout the Commonwealth.

This chapter shall supersede all general and special acts and charter provisions which purport to deal with matters covered by this chapter except that the provisions of §§ 15.2-852, 15.2-2287, 15.2-2287.1, and 15.2-2289 and ordinances adopted pursuant thereto shall remain in force and effect. The provisions of this chapter shall be supplemented but not superseded by the provisions on ethics in public contracting in Article 6 (§ 2.2-4367 et seq.) of Chapter 43 of this title and ordinances adopted pursuant to § 2.2-3104.2 regulating receipt of gifts.

The provisions of this chapter do not preclude prosecution for any violation of any criminal law of the Commonwealth, including Articles 2 (Bribery and Related Offenses, § 18.2-438 et seq.) and 3 (Bribery of Public Servants and Party Officials, § 18.2-446 et seq.) of Chapter 10 of Title 18.2, and do not constitute a defense to any prosecution for such a violation.

This chapter shall be liberally construed to accomplish its purpose.

### § 2.2-3100.1. Copy of chapter; review by officers and employees.

Any person required to file a disclosure statement of personal interests pursuant to subsections A or B of § 2.2-3114, subsections A or B of § 2.2-3115 or § 2.2-3116 shall be furnished by the public body's administrator a copy of this chapter within two weeks following the person's election, reelection, employment, appointment or reappointment.

All officers and employees shall read and familiarize themselves with the provisions of this chapter.

### § 2.2-3101. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Advisory agency" means any board, commission, committee or post which does not exercise any sovereign power or duty, but is appointed by a governmental agency or officer or is created by law for the purpose of making studies or recommendations, or advising or consulting with a governmental agency.

"Affiliated business entity relationship" means a relationship, other than a parent-subsidiary relationship, that exists when (i) one business entity has a controlling ownership interest in the other business entity, (ii) a controlling owner in one entity is also a controlling owner in the other entity, or (iii) there is shared management or control between the business entities. Factors that may be considered in determining the existence of an affiliated business entity relationship include that the same person or substantially the same person owns or manages the two entities, there are common or commingled funds or assets, the business entities share the use of the same offices or employees, or otherwise share activities, resources or personnel on a regular basis, or there is otherwise a close working relationship between the entities.

"Business" means a corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship, firm, enterprise, franchise, association, trust or foundation, or any other individual or entity carrying on a business or profession, whether or not for profit.

"Candidate" means a person who seeks or campaigns for an office of the Commonwealth or one of its governmental units in a general, primary, or special election and who is qualified to have his name placed on the ballot for the office. The candidate shall become

subject to the provisions of this chapter upon the filing of a statement of qualification pursuant to § 24.2-501. The State Board of Elections or general registrar shall notify each such candidate of the provisions of this chapter. Notification made by the general registrar shall consist of information developed by the State Board of Elections.

"Contract" means any agreement to which a governmental agency is a party, or any agreement on behalf of a governmental agency that involves the payment of money appropriated by the General Assembly or a political subdivision, whether or not such agreement is executed in the name of the Commonwealth, or some political subdivision thereof. "Contract" includes a subcontract only when the contract of which it is a part is with the officer's or employee's own governmental agency.

"Council" means the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council established in § 30-355.

"Employee" means all persons employed by a governmental or advisory agency, unless otherwise limited by the context of its use.

"Financial institution" means any bank, trust company, savings institution, industrial loan association, consumer finance company, credit union, broker-dealer as defined in subsection A of § 13.1-501, or investment company or advisor registered under the federal Investment Advisors Act or Investment Company Act of 1940.

"Gift" means any gratuity, favor, discount, entertainment, hospitality, loan, forbearance, or other item having monetary value. It includes services as well as gifts of transportation, local travel, lodgings and meals, whether provided in-kind, by purchase of a ticket, payment in advance or reimbursement after the expense has been incurred. "Gift" does not include (i) any offer of a ticket, coupon, or other admission or pass unless the ticket, coupon, admission, or pass is used; (ii) honorary degrees; (iii) any athletic, merit, or need-based scholarship or any other financial aid awarded by a public or private school, institution of higher education, or other educational program pursuant to such school, institution, or program's financial aid standards and procedures applicable to the general public; (iv) a campaign contribution properly received and reported pursuant to Chapter 9.3 (§ 24.2-945 et seq.) of Title 24.2; (v) any gift related to the private profession or occupation or volunteer service of an officer or employee or of a member of his immediate family; (vi) food or beverages consumed while attending an event at which the filer is performing official duties related to his public service; (vii) food and beverages received at or registration or attendance fees waived for any event at which the filer is a featured speaker, presenter, or lecturer; (viii) unsolicited awards of appreciation or recognition in the form of a plaque, trophy, wall memento, or similar item that is given in recognition of public, civic, charitable, or professional service; (ix) a devise or inheritance; (x) travel disclosed pursuant to the Campaign Finance Disclosure Act (§ 24.2-945 et seq.); (xi) travel paid for or provided by the government of the United States, any of its territories, or any state or any political subdivision of such state; (xii) travel provided to facilitate attendance by a legislator at a regular or special session of the General Assembly, a meeting of a legislative committee or commission, or a national conference where attendance is approved by the House Committee on Rules or its Chairman or the Senate Committee on Rules or its Chairman; (xiii) travel related to an official meeting of, or any meal provided for attendance at such meeting by, the Commonwealth, its political subdivisions, or any board, commission, authority, or other entity, or any charitable organization established pursuant to § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code affiliated with such entity, to which such person has been appointed or elected or is a member by virtue of his office or employment; (xiv) gifts with a value of less than $20; (xv) attendance at a reception or similar function where food, such as hors d'oeuvres, and beverages that can be conveniently consumed by a person while standing or walking are offered; (xvi) tickets or the registration or admission fees to an event that are provided by an agency to its own officers or employees for the purposes of performing official duties related to their public service; or (xvii) gifts from relatives or personal friends. For the purpose of this definition, "relative" means the donee's spouse, child, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, or first cousin; a person to whom the donee is engaged to be married; the donee's or his spouse's parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, step-parent, step-grandparent, step-grandchild, step-brother, or step-sister; or the donee's brother's or sister's spouse or the donee's son-in-law or daughter-in-law. For the purpose of this definition, "personal friend" does not include any person that the filer knows or has reason to know is (a) a lobbyist registered pursuant to Article 3 (§ 2.2-418 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 2.2; (b) a lobbyist's principal as defined in § 2.2-419; (c) for an officer or employee of a local governmental or advisory agency, a person, organization, or business who is a party to or is seeking to become a party to a contract with the local agency of which he is an officer or an employee; or (d) for an officer or employee of a state governmental

or advisory agency, a person, organization, or business who is a party to or is seeking to become a party to a contract with the Commonwealth. For purposes of this definition, "person, organization, or business" includes individuals who are officers, directors, or owners of or who have a controlling ownership interest in such organization or business.

"Governmental agency" means each component part of the legislative, executive or judicial branches of state and local government, including each office, department, authority, post, commission, committee, and each institution or board created by law to exercise some regulatory or sovereign power or duty as distinguished from purely advisory powers or duties. Corporations organized or controlled by the Virginia Retirement System are "governmental agencies" for purposes of this chapter.

"Immediate family" means (i) a spouse and (ii) any other person who resides in the same household as the officer or employee and who is a dependent of the officer or employee.

"Officer" means any person appointed or elected to any governmental or advisory agency including local school boards, whether or not he receives compensation or other emolument of office. Unless the context requires otherwise, "officer" includes members of the judiciary.

"Parent-subsidiary relationship" means a relationship that exists when one corporation directly or indirectly owns shares possessing more than 50 percent of the voting power of another corporation.

"Personal interest" means a financial benefit or liability accruing to an officer or employee or to a member of his immediate family. Such interest shall exist by reason of (i) ownership in a business if the ownership interest exceeds three percent of the total equity of the business; (ii) annual income that exceeds, or may reasonably be anticipated to exceed, $5,000 from ownership in real or personal property or a business; (iii) salary, other compensation, fringe benefits, or benefits from the use of property, or any combination thereof, paid or provided by a business or governmental agency that exceeds, or may reasonably be anticipated to exceed, $5,000 annually; (iv) ownership of real or personal property if the interest exceeds $5,000 in value and excluding ownership in a business, income, or salary, other compensation, fringe benefits or benefits from the use of property; (v) personal liability incurred or assumed on behalf of a business if the liability exceeds three percent of the asset value of the business; or (vi) an option for ownership of a business or real or personal property if the ownership interest will consist of clause (i) or (iv).

"Personal interest in a contract" means a personal interest that an officer or employee has in a contract with a governmental agency, whether due to his being a party to the contract or due to a personal interest in a business that is a party to the contract.

"Personal interest in a transaction" means a personal interest of an officer or employee in any matter considered by his agency. Such personal interest exists when an officer or employee or a member of his immediate family has a personal interest in property or a business or governmental agency, or represents or provides services to any individual or business and such property, business or represented or served individual or business (i) is the subject of the transaction or (ii) may realize a reasonably foreseeable direct or indirect benefit or detriment as a result of the action of the agency considering the transaction. Notwithstanding the above, such personal interest in a transaction shall not be deemed to exist where (a) an elected member of a local governing body serves without remuneration as a member of the board of trustees of a not-for-profit entity and such elected member or member of his immediate family has no personal interest related to the not-for-profit entity or (b) an officer, employee, or elected member of a local governing body is appointed by such local governing body to serve on a governmental agency, or an officer, employee, or elected member of a separate local governmental agency formed by a local governing body is appointed to serve on a governmental agency, and the personal interest in the transaction of the governmental agency is the result of the salary, other compensation, fringe benefits, or benefits provided by the local governing body or the separate governmental agency to the officer, employee, elected member, or member of his immediate family.

"State and local government officers and employees" shall not include members of the General Assembly.

"State filer" means those officers and employees required to file a disclosure statement of their personal interests pursuant to subsection A or B of § 2.2-3114.

"Transaction" means any matter considered by any governmental or advisory agency, whether in a committee, subcommittee, or other entity of that agency or before the agency itself, on which official action is taken or contemplated.

## Article 2. Generally Prohibited and Unlawful Conduct.

### § 2.2-3102. Application.

This article applies to generally prohibited conduct that shall be unlawful and to state and local government officers and employees.

### § 2.2-3103. Prohibited conduct.

No officer or employee of a state or local governmental or advisory agency shall:

1. Solicit or accept money or other thing of value for services performed within the scope of his official duties, except the compensation, expenses or other remuneration paid by the agency of which he is an officer or employee. This prohibition shall not apply to the acceptance of special benefits that may be authorized by law;
2. Offer or accept any money or other thing of value for or in consideration of obtaining employment, appointment, or promotion of any person with any governmental or advisory agency;
3. Offer or accept any money or other thing of value for or in consideration of the use of his public position to obtain a contract for any person or business with any governmental or advisory agency;
4. Use for his own economic benefit or that of another party confidential information that he has acquired by reason of his public position and which is not available to the public;
5. Accept any money, loan, gift, favor, service, or business or professional opportunity that reasonably tends to influence him in the performance of his official duties. This subdivision shall not apply to any political contribution actually used for political campaign or constituent service purposes and reported as required by Chapter 9.3 (§ 24.2-945 et seq.) of Title 24.2;
6. Accept any business or professional opportunity when he knows that there is a reasonable likelihood that the opportunity is being afforded him to influence him in the performance of his official duties;
7. Accept any honoraria for any appearance, speech, or article in which the officer or employee provides expertise or opinions related to the performance of his official duties. The term "honoraria" shall not include any payment for or reimbursement to such person for his actual travel, lodging, or subsistence expenses incurred in connection with such appearance, speech, or article or in the alternative a payment of money or anything of value not in excess of the per diem deduction allowable under § 162 of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended from time to time. The prohibition in this subdivision shall apply only to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Governor's Secretaries, and heads of departments of state government;
8. Accept a gift from a person who has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance of the officer's or employee's official duties under circumstances where the timing and nature of the gift would cause a reasonable person to question the officer's or employee's impartiality in the matter affecting the donor. Violations of this subdivision shall not be subject to criminal law penalties;
9. Accept gifts from sources on a basis so frequent as to raise an appearance of the use of his public office for private gain. Violations of this subdivision shall not be subject to criminal law penalties; or
10. Use his public position to retaliate or threaten to retaliate against any person for expressing views on matters of public concern or for exercising any right that is otherwise protected by law, provided, however, that this subdivision shall not restrict the authority of any public employer to govern conduct of its employees, and to take disciplinary action, in accordance with applicable law, and provided further that this subdivision shall not limit the authority of a constitutional officer to discipline or discharge an employee with or without cause.

### § 2.2-3103.1. Certain gifts prohibited.

A. For purposes of this section:

"Person, organization, or business" includes individuals who are officers, directors, or owners of or who have a controlling ownership interest in such organization or business.

"Widely attended event" means an event at which at least 25 persons have been invited to attend or there is a reasonable expectation that at least 25 persons will attend the event and the event is open to individuals (i) who are members of a public, civic, charitable, or professional organization, (ii) who are from a particular industry or profession, or (iii) who represent persons interested in a particular issue.

B. No officer or employee of a local governmental or advisory agency or candidate required to file the disclosure form prescribed in § 2.2-3117 or a member of his immediate family shall solicit, accept, or receive any single gift with a value in excess of $100 or any combination of gifts with an aggregate value in excess of $100 within any calendar year for himself or a member of his immediate family from any person that he or a member of his immediate family knows or has reason to know is (i) a lobbyist registered pursuant to Article 3 (§ 2.2-418 et seq.) of Chapter 4; (ii) a lobbyist's principal as defined in § 2.2-419; or (iii) a person, organization, or business who is or is seeking to become a party to a contract with the local agency of which he is an officer or an employee. Gifts with a value of less than $20 are not subject to aggregation for purposes of this prohibition.

C. No officer or employee of a state governmental or advisory agency or candidate required to file the disclosure form prescribed in § 2.2-3117 or a member of his immediate family shall solicit, accept, or receive any single gift with a value in excess of $100 or any combination of gifts with an aggregate value in excess of $100 within any calendar year for himself or a member of his immediate family from any person that he or a member of his immediate family knows or has reason to know is (i) a lobbyist registered pursuant to Article 3 (§ 2.2-418 et seq.) of Chapter 4; (ii) a lobbyist's principal as defined in § 2.2-419; or (iii) a person, organization, or business who is or is seeking to become a party to a contract with the state governmental or advisory agency of which he is an officer or an employee or over which he has the authority to direct such agency's activities. Gifts with a value of less than $20 are not subject to aggregation for purposes of this prohibition.

D. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections B and C, such officer, employee, or candidate or a member of his immediate family may accept or receive a gift of food and beverages, entertainment, or the cost of admission with a value in excess of $100 when such gift is accepted or received while in attendance at a widely attended event and is associated with the event. Such gifts shall be reported on the disclosure form prescribed in § 2.2-3117.

E. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections B and C, such officer or employee or a member of his immediate family may accept or receive a gift from a foreign dignitary with a value exceeding $100 for which the fair market value or a gift of greater or equal value has not been provided or exchanged. Such gift shall be accepted on behalf of the Commonwealth or a locality and archived in accordance with guidelines established by the Library of Virginia. Such gift shall be disclosed as having been accepted on behalf of the Commonwealth or a locality, but the value of such gift shall not be required to be disclosed.

F. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections B and C, such officer, employee, or candidate or a member of his immediate family may accept or receive certain gifts with a value in excess of $100 from a person listed in subsection B or C if such gift was provided to such officer, employee, or candidate or a member of his immediate family on the basis of a personal friendship. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a person listed in subsection B or C may be a personal friend of such officer, employee, or candidate or his immediate family for purposes of this subsection. In determining whether a person listed in subsection B or C is a personal friend, the following factors shall be considered: (i) the circumstances under which the gift was offered; (ii) the history of the relationship between the person and the donor, including the nature and length of the friendship and any previous exchange of gifts between them; (iii) to the extent known to the person, whether the donor personally paid for the gift or sought a tax deduction or business reimbursement for the gift; and (iv) whether the donor has given the same or similar gifts to other persons required to file the disclosure form prescribed in § 2.2-3117 or § 30-111.

G. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections B and C, such officer, employee, or candidate or a member of his immediate family may accept or receive gifts of travel, including travel-related transportation, lodging, hospitality, food or beverages, or other thing of value, with a value in excess of $100 that is paid for or provided by a person listed in subsection B or C when the officer, employee, or candidate has submitted a request for approval of such travel to the Council and has received the approval of the Council pursuant to § 30-356.1. Such gifts shall be reported on the disclosure form prescribed in § 2.2-3117.

H. During the pendency of a civil action in any state or federal court to which the Commonwealth is a party, the Governor or the Attorney General or any employee of the Governor or the Attorney General who is subject to the provisions of this chapter shall not solicit, accept, or receive any gift from any person that he knows or has reason to know is a person, organization, or business that is a party to such civil action. A person, organization, or business that is a party to such civil action shall not knowingly give any gift to the Governor or the Attorney General or any of their employees who are subject to the provisions of this chapter.

I. The $100 limitation imposed in accordance with this section shall be adjusted by the Council every five years, as of January 1 of that year, in an amount equal to the annual increases for that five-year period in the United States Average Consumer Price Index for all items, all urban consumers (CPI-U), as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor, rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

J. The provisions of this section shall not apply to any justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia, judge of the Court of Appeals of Virginia, judge of any circuit court, or judge or substitute judge of any district court. However, nothing in this subsection shall be construed to authorize the acceptance of any gift if such acceptance would constitute a violation of the Canons of Judicial Conduct for the State of Virginia.

### § 2.2-3103.2. Return of gifts.

No person shall be in violation of any provision of this chapter prohibiting the acceptance of a gift if (i) the gift is not used by such person and the gift or its equivalent in money is returned to the donor or delivered to a charitable organization within a reasonable period of time upon the discovery of the value of the gift and is not claimed as a charitable contribution for federal income tax purposes or (ii) consideration is given by the donee to the donor for the value of the gift within a reasonable period of time upon the discovery of the value of the gift provided that such consideration reduces the value of the gift to an amount not in excess of $100 as provided in subsection B or C of § 2.2-3103.1.

### § 2.2-3104. Prohibited conduct for certain officers and employees of state government.

For one year after the termination of public employment or service, no state officer or employee shall, before the agency of which he was an officer or employee, represent a client or act in a representative capacity on behalf of any person or group, for compensation, on matters related to legislation, executive orders, or regulations promulgated by the agency of which he was an officer or employee. This prohibition shall be in addition to the prohibitions contained in § 2.2-3103.

For the purposes of this section, "state officer or employee" shall mean (i) the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, and officers appointed by the Governor, whether confirmation by the General Assembly or by either house thereof is required or not, who are regularly employed on a full-time salaried basis; those officers and employees of executive branch agencies who report directly to the agency head; and those at the level immediately below those who report directly to the agency head and are at a payband 6 or higher and (ii) the officers and professional employees of the legislative branch designated by the joint rules committee of the General Assembly. For the purposes of this section, the General Assembly and the legislative branch agencies shall be deemed one agency.

To the extent this prohibition applies to the Governor's Secretaries, "agency" means all agencies assigned to the Secretary by law or by executive order of the Governor.

Any person subject to the provisions of this section may apply to the Council or Attorney General, as provided in § 2.2-3121 or § 2.2-3126, for an advisory opinion as to the application of the restriction imposed by this section on any post-public employment position or opportunity.

### § 2.2-3104.01. Prohibited conduct; bids or proposals under the Virginia Public Procurement Act, Public-Private Transportation Act, and Public-Private Education Facilitiesand Infrastructure Act; loans or grants from the Commonwealth's Development Opportunity Fund.

A. Neither the Governor, his political action committee, or the Governor's Secretaries, if the Secretary is responsible to the Governor for an executive branch agency with jurisdiction over the matters at issue, shall knowingly solicit or accept a contribution, gift, or other item with a value greater than $50 from any bidder, offeror, or private entity, or from an officer or director of such bidder, offeror, or private entity, who has submitted a bid or proposal to an executive branch agency that is directly responsible to the Governor pursuant to the Virginia Public Procurement Act (§ 2.2-4300 et seq.), the Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995 (§ 33.2-1800 et seq.), or the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002 (§ 56-575.1 et seq.) (i) during the period between the submission of the bid and the award of the public contract under the Virginia Public Procurement Act or (ii) following the submission of a proposal under the Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995 or the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002 until the execution of a comprehensive agreement thereunder.

B. The provisions of this section shall apply only for public contracts, proposals, or comprehensive agreements where the stated or expected value of the contract is $5 million or more. The provisions of this section shall not apply to contracts awarded as the result of competitive sealed bidding as set forth in § 2.2-4302.1.

C. Any person who knowingly violates this section

shall be subject to a civil penalty of $500 or up to two times the amount of the contribution or gift, whichever is greater, and the contribution, gift, or other item shall be returned to the donor. The attorney for the Commonwealth shall initiate civil proceedings to enforce the civil penalties. Any civil penalties collected shall be payable to the State Treasurer for deposit to the general fund and shall be used exclusively to fund the Council.

### § 2.2-3104.02. Prohibited conduct for constitutional officers.

In addition to the prohibitions contained in § 2.2-3103, no constitutional officer shall, during the one year after the termination of his public service, act in a representative capacity on behalf of any person or group, for compensation, on any matter before the agency of which he was an officer.

The provisions of this section shall not apply to any attorney for the Commonwealth.

Any person subject to the provisions of this section may apply to the Council or the attorney for the Commonwealth for the jurisdiction where such person was elected as provided in § 2.2-3126, for an advisory opinion as to the application of the restriction imposed by this section on any post-public employment position or opportunity.

### § 2.2-3104.1. Exclusion of certain awards from scope of chapter.

The provisions of this chapter shall not be construed to prohibit or apply to the acceptance by (i) any employee of a local government, or (ii) a teacher or other employee of a local school board of an award or payment in honor of meritorious or exceptional services performed by the teacher or employee and made by an organization exempt from federal income taxation pursuant to the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

### § 2.2-3104.2. Ordinance regulating receipt of gifts.

The governing body of any county, city, or town may adopt an ordinance setting a monetary limit on the acceptance of any gift by the officers, appointees or employees of the county, city or town and requiring the disclosure by such officers, appointees or employees of the receipt of any gift.

## Article 3. Prohibited Conduct Relating to Contracts.

### § 2.2-3105. Application.

This article proscribes certain conduct relating to contracts by state and local government officers and employees. The provisions of this article shall be supplemented but not superseded by the provisions on ethics in public contracting in Article 6 (§ 2.2-4367 et seq.) of Chapter 43 of this title.

### § 2.2-3106. Prohibited contracts by officers and employees of state government and Eastern Virginia Medical School.

A. No officer or employee of any governmental agency of state government or Eastern Virginia Medical School shall have a personal interest in a contract with the governmental agency of which he is an officer or employee, other than his own contract of employment.

B. No officer or employee of any governmental agency of state government or Eastern Virginia Medical School shall have a personal interest in a contract with any other governmental agency of state government unless such contract is (i) awarded as a result of competitive sealed bidding or competitive negotiation as set forth in § 2.2-4302.1 or 2.2-4302.2 or (ii) is awarded after a finding, in writing, by the administrative head of the governmental agency that competitive bidding or negotiation is contrary to the best interest of the public.

C. The provisions of this section shall not apply to:

1. An employee's personal interest in additional contracts of employment with his own governmental agency that accrue to him because of a member of his immediate family, provided the employee does not exercise any control over the employment or the employment activities of the member of his immediate family and the employee is not in a position to influence those activities;
2. The personal interest of an officer or employee of a public institution of higher education or the Eastern Virginia Medical School in additional contracts of employment with his own governmental agency that accrue to him because of a member of his immediate family, provided (i) the officer or employee and the immediate family member are engaged in teaching, research or administrative support positions at the educational institution or the Eastern Virginia Medical School, (ii) the governing board of the

educational institution finds that it is in the best interests of the institution or the Eastern Virginia Medical School and the Commonwealth for such dual employment to exist, and (iii) after such finding, the governing board of the educational institution or the Eastern Virginia Medical School ensures that the officer or employee, or the immediate family member, does not have sole authority to supervise, evaluate or make personnel decisions regarding the other;

3. An officer's or employee's personal interest in a contract of employment with any other governmental agency of state government;

4. Contracts for the sale by a governmental agency or the Eastern Virginia Medical School of services or goods at uniform prices available to the general public;

5. An employee's personal interest in a contract between a public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth or the Eastern Virginia Medical School and a publisher or wholesaler of textbooks or other educational materials for students, which accrues to him solely because he has authored or otherwise created such textbooks or materials;

6. An employee's personal interest in a contract with his or her employing public institution of higher education to acquire the collections or scholarly works owned by the employee, including manuscripts, musical scores, poetry, paintings, books or other materials, writings, or papers of an academic, research, or cultural value to the institution, provided the president of the institution approves the acquisition of such collections or scholarly works as being in the best interests of the institution's public mission of service, research, or education;

7. Subject to approval by the board of visitors, an employee's personal interest in a contract between the Eastern Virginia Medical School or a public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth that operates a school of medicine or dentistry and a not-for-profit nonstock corporation that operates a clinical practice within such public institution of higher education or the Eastern Virginia Medical School and of which such employee is a member or employee;

8. Subject to approval by the relevant board of visitors, an employee's personal interest in a contract for research and development or commercialization of intellectual property between a public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth or the Eastern Virginia Medical School and a business in which the employee has a personal interest, if (i) the employee's personal interest has been disclosed to and approved by such public institution of higher education or the Eastern Virginia Medical School prior to the time at which the contract is entered into; (ii) the employee promptly files a disclosure statement pursuant to § 2.2-3117 and thereafter files such statement annually on or before February 1; (iii) the institution has established a formal policy regarding such contracts, approved by the State Council of Higher Education or, in the case of the Eastern Virginia Medical School, a formal policy regarding such contracts in conformity with any applicable federal regulations that has been approved by its board of visitors; and (iv) no later than December 31 of each year, the institution or the Eastern Virginia Medical School files an annual report with the Secretary of the Commonwealth disclosing each open contract entered into subject to this provision, the names of the parties to each contract, the date each contract was executed and its term, the subject of each contractual arrangement, the nature of the conflict of interest, the institution's or the Eastern Virginia Medical School's employee responsible for administering each contract, the details of the institution's or the Eastern Virginia Medical School's commitment or investment of resources or finances for each contract, and any other information requested by the Secretary of the Commonwealth; or

9. Subject to approval by the relevant board of visitors, an employee's personal interest in a contract between a public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth or the Eastern Virginia Medical School and a business in which the employee has a personal interest, if (i) the personal interest has been disclosed to the institution or the Eastern Virginia Medical School prior to the time the contract is entered into; (ii) the employee files a disclosure statement pursuant to § 2.2-3117 and thereafter annually on or before February 1; (iii) the employee does not participate in the institution's or the Eastern Virginia Medical School's decision to contract; (iv) the president of the institution or the Eastern Virginia Medical School finds and certifies in writing that the contract is for goods and services needed for

quality patient care, including related medical education or research, by the institution's medical center or the Eastern Virginia Medical School, its affiliated teaching hospitals and other organizations necessary for the fulfillment of its mission, including the acquisition of drugs, therapies and medical technologies; and (v) no later than December 31 of each year, the institution or the Eastern Virginia Medical School files an annual report with the Secretary of the Commonwealth disclosing each open contract entered subject to this provision, the names of the parties to each contract, the date each contract was executed and its term, the subject of each contractual arrangement, the nature of the conflict of interest, the institution's or the Eastern Virginia Medical School's employee responsible for administering each contract, the details of the institution's or the Eastern Virginia Medical School's commitment or investment of resources or finances for each contract, and any other information requested by the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

D. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivisions C 8 and C 9, if the research and development or commercialization of intellectual property or the employee's personal interest in a contract with a business is subject to policies and regulations governing conflicts of interest promulgated by any agency of the United States government, including the adoption of policies requiring the disclosure and management of such conflicts of interests, the policies established by the Eastern Virginia Medical School pursuant to such federal requirements shall constitute compliance with subdivisions C 8 and C 9, upon notification by the Eastern Virginia Medical School to the Secretary of the Commonwealth by January 31 of each year of evidence of their compliance with such federal policies and regulations.

E. The board of visitors may delegate the authority granted under subdivision C 8 to the president of the institution. If the board elects to delegate such authority, the board shall include this delegation of authority in the formal policy required by clause (iii) of subdivision C 8. In those instances where the board has delegated such authority, on or before December 1 of each year, the president of the relevant institution shall file a report with the relevant board of visitors disclosing each open contract entered into subject to this provision, the names of the parties to each contract, the date each contract was executed and its term, the subject of each contractual arrangement, the nature of the conflict of interest, the institution's or the Eastern Virginia Medical School's employee responsible for administering each contract, the details of the institution's or the Eastern Virginia Medical School's commitment or investment of resources or finances for each contract, the details of how revenues are to be dispersed, and any other information requested by the board of visitors.

## § 2.2-3107. Prohibited contracts by members of county boards of supervisors, city councils and town councils.

A. No person elected or appointed as a member of the governing body of a county, city or town shall have a personal interest in (i) any contract with his governing body, or (ii) any contract with any governmental agency that is a component part of his local government and which is subject to the ultimate control of the governing body of which he is a member, or (iii) any contract other than a contract of employment with any other governmental agency if such person's governing body appoints a majority of the members of the governing body of the second governmental agency.

B. The provisions of this section shall not apply to:

1. A member's personal interest in a contract of employment provided (i) the officer or employee was employed by the governmental agency prior to July 1, 1983, in accordance with the provisions of the former Conflict of Interests Act, Chapter 22 (§ 2.1-347 et seq.) of Title 2.1 as it existed on June 30, 1983, or (ii) the employment first began prior to the member becoming a member of the governing body;
2. Contracts for the sale by a governmental agency of services or goods at uniform prices available to the public; or
3. A contract awarded to a member of a governing body as a result of competitive sealed bidding where the governing body has established a need for the same or substantially similar goods through purchases prior to the election or appointment of the member to serve on the governing body. However, the member shall have no involvement in the preparation of the specifications for such contract, and the remaining members of the governing body, by written resolution, shall state that it is in the public interest for the member to bid on such contract.

## § 2.2-3108. Prohibited contracts by members of school boards.

A. No person elected or appointed as a member of a local school board shall have a personal interest in (i) any contract with his school board or (ii) any contract

with any governmental agency that is subject to the ultimate control of the school board of which he is a member.

B. The provisions of this section shall not apply to:

1. A member's personal interest in a contract of employment provided the employment first began prior to the member becoming a member of the school board;

2. Contracts for the sale by a governmental agency of services or goods at uniform prices available to the public; or

3. A contract awarded to a member of a school board as a result of competitive sealed bidding where the school board has established a need for the same or substantially similar goods through purchases prior to the election or appointment of the member to serve on the school board. However, the member shall have no involvement in the preparation of the specifications for such contract, and the remaining members of the school board, by written resolution, shall state that it is in the public interest for the member to bid on such contract.

### § 2.2-3109. Prohibited contracts by other officers and employees of local governmental agencies.

A. No other officer or employee of any governmental agency of local government, including a hospital authority as defined in § 2.2-3109.1, shall have a personal interest in a contract with the agency of which he is an officer or employee other than his own contract of employment.

B. No officer or employee of any governmental agency of local government, including a hospital authority as defined in § 2.2-3109.1, shall have a personal interest in a contract with any other governmental agency that is a component of the government of his county, city or town unless such contract is (i) awarded as a result of competitive sealed bidding or competitive negotiation as set forth in § 2.2-4302.1 or § 2.2-4302.2 or is awarded as a result of a procedure embodying competitive principles as authorized by subdivision A 10 or 11 of § 2.2-4343 or (ii) is awarded after a finding, in writing, by the administrative head of the governmental agency that competitive bidding or negotiation is contrary to the best interest of the public.

C. The provisions of this section shall not apply to:

1. An employee's personal interest in additional contracts for goods or services, or contracts of employment with his own governmental agency that accrue to him because of a member of his immediate family, provided the employee does not exercise any control over (i) the employment or the employment activities of the member of his immediate family and (ii) the employee is not in a position to influence those activities or the award of the contract for goods or services;

2. An officer's or employee's personal interest in a contract of employment with any other governmental agency that is a component part of the government of his county, city or town;

3. Contracts for the sale by a governmental agency of services or goods at uniform prices available to the general public;

4. Members of local governing bodies who are subject to § 2.2-3107;

5. Members of local school boards who are subject to § 2.2-3108; or

6. Any ownership or financial interest of members of the governing body, administrators, and other personnel serving in a public charter school in renovating, lending, granting, or leasing public charter school facilities, as the case may be, provided such interest has been disclosed in the public charter school application as required by § 22.1-212.8.

### § 2.2-3109.1. Prohibited contracts; additional exclusions for contracts by officers and employees of hospital authorities.

A. As used in this section, "hospital authority" means a hospital authority established pursuant to Chapter 53 (§ 15.2-5300 et seq.) of Title 15.2 or an Act of Assembly.

B. The provisions of § 2.2-3109 shall not apply to:

1. The personal interest of an officer or employee of a hospital authority in additional contracts of employment with his own governmental agency that accrue to him because of a member of his immediate family, provided (i) the officer or employee and the immediate family member are licensed members of the medical profession or hold administrative support positions at the hospital authority, (ii) the governing board of the hospital authority finds that it is in the best interests of the hospital authority and the county, city, or town for such dual employment to exist, and (iii) after such finding, the governing board of the hospital authority ensures that neither the officer or employee, nor the immediate family member,

has sole authority to supervise, evaluate, or make personnel decisions regarding the other;

2. Subject to approval by the governing board of the hospital authority, an officer or employee's personal interest in a contract between his hospital authority and a professional entity that operates a clinical practice at any medical facilities of such other hospital authority and of which such officer or employee is a member or employee;

3. Subject to approval by the relevant governing body, an officer or employee's personal interest in a contract for research and development or commercialization of intellectual property between the hospital authority and a business in which the employee has a personal interest, provided (i) the officer or employee's personal interest has been disclosed to and approved by the hospital authority prior to the time at which the contract is entered into; (ii) the officer or employee promptly files a disclosure statement pursuant to § 2.2-3117 and thereafter files such statement annually on or before January 15; (iii) the local hospital authority has established a formal policy regarding such contracts in conformity with any applicable federal regulations that has been approved by its governing body; and (iv) no later than December 31 of each year, the local hospital authority files an annual report with the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council disclosing each open contract entered into subject to this provision, the names of the parties to each contract, the date each contract was executed and its term, the subject of each contractual arrangement, the nature of the conflict of interest, the hospital authority's employee responsible for administering each contract, the details of such hospital authority's commitment or investment of resources or finances for each contract, and any other information requested by the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council; or

4. Subject to approval by the relevant governing body, an officer or employee's personal interest in a contract between the hospital authority and a business in which the officer or employee has a personal interest, provided (i) the personal interest has been disclosed to the hospital authority prior to the time the contract is entered into; (ii) the officer or employee files a disclosure statement pursuant to § 2.2-3117 and thereafter annually on or before January 15; (iii) the officer or employee does not participate in the hospital authority's decision to contract; (iv) the president or chief executive officer of the hospital authority finds and certifies in writing that the contract is for goods and services needed for quality patient care, including related medical education or research, by any of the hospital authority's medical facilities or any of its affiliated organizations, or is otherwise necessary for the fulfillment of its mission, including but not limited to the acquisition of drugs, therapies, and medical technologies; and (v) no later than December 31 of each year, the hospital authority files an annual report with the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council disclosing each open contract entered into subject to this provision, the names of the parties to each contract, the date each contract was executed and its term, the subject of each contractual arrangement, the nature of the conflict of interest, the hospital authority's employee responsible for administering each contract, the details of the hospital authority's commitment or investment of resources or finances for each contract, and any other information requested by the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivisions B 3 and B 4, if the research and development or commercialization of intellectual property or the officer or employee's personal interest in a contract with a business is subject to policies and regulations governing conflicts of interest promulgated by any agency of the United States government, including the adoption of policies requiring the disclosure and management of such conflicts of interest, the policies established by the hospital authority pursuant to such federal requirements shall constitute compliance with subdivisions B 3 and B 4, upon notification by the hospital authority to the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council by January 31 of each year of evidence of its compliance with such federal policies and regulations.

D. The governing body may delegate the authority granted under subdivision B 2 to the president or chief executive officer of hospital authority. If the board elects to delegate such authority, the board shall include this delegation of authority in the formal policy required by clause (iii) of subdivision B 3. In those instances where the board has delegated such authority, on or before December 1 of each year, the president or chief executive officer of the hospital authority shall file a report with the relevant governing body disclosing each open contract entered into subject to this provision, the names of the parties to each contract, the date

each contract was executed and its term, the subject of each contractual arrangement, the nature of the conflict of interest, the hospital authority's employee responsible for administering each contract, the details of the hospital authority's commitment or investment of resources or finances for each contract, the details of how revenues are to be dispersed, and any other information requested by the governing body.

## § 2.2-3110. Further exceptions.

A. The provisions of Article 3 (§ 2.2-3106 et seq.) shall not apply to:

1. The sale, lease or exchange of real property between an officer or employee and a governmental agency, provided the officer or employee does not participate in any way as such officer or employee in such sale, lease or exchange, and this fact is set forth as a matter of public record by the governing body of the governmental agency or by the administrative head thereof;
2. The publication of official notices;
3. Contracts between the government or school board of a county, city, or town with a population of less than 10,000 and an officer or employee of that county, city, or town government or school board when the total of such contracts between the government or school board and the officer or employee of that government or school board or a business controlled by him does not exceed $5,000 per year or such amount exceeds $5,000 and is less than $25,000 but results from contracts arising from awards made on a sealed bid basis, and such officer or employee has made disclosure as provided for in § 2.2-3115;
4. An officer or employee whose sole personal interest in a contract with the governmental agency is by reason of income from the contracting firm or governmental agency in excess of $5,000 per year, provided the officer or employee or a member of his immediate family does not participate and has no authority to participate in the procurement or letting of such contract on behalf of the contracting firm and the officer or employee either does not have authority to participate in the procurement or letting of the contract on behalf of his governmental agency or he disqualifies himself as a matter of public record and does not participate on behalf of his governmental agency in negotiating the contract or in approving the contract;
5. When the governmental agency is a public institution of higher education, an officer or employee whose personal interest in a contract with the institution is by reason of an ownership in the contracting firm in excess of three percent of the contracting firm's equity or such ownership interest and income from the contracting firm is in excess of $5,000 per year, provided that (i) the officer or employee's ownership interest, or ownership and income interest, and that of any immediate family member in the contracting firm is disclosed in writing to the president of the institution, which writing certifies that the officer or employee has not and will not participate in the contract negotiations on behalf of the contracting firm or the institution, (ii) the president of the institution, or an officer or administrator designated by the president of the institution to make findings imposed by this section, makes a written finding as a matter of public record that the contract is in the best interests of the institution, (iii) the officer or employee either does not have authority to participate in the procurement or letting of the contract on behalf of the institution or disqualifies himself as a matter of public record, and (iv) the officer or employee does not participate on behalf of the institution in negotiating the contract or approving the contract;
6. Except when the governmental agency is the Virginia Retirement System, contracts between an officer's or employee's governmental agency and a public service corporation, financial institution, or company furnishing public utilities in which the officer or employee has a personal interest, provided the officer or employee disqualifies himself as a matter of public record and does not participate on behalf of his governmental agency in negotiating the contract or in approving the contract;
7. Contracts for the purchase of goods or services when the contract does not exceed $500;
8. Grants or other payment under any program wherein uniform rates for, or the amounts paid to, all qualified applicants are established solely by the administering governmental agency;
9. An officer or employee whose sole personal interest in a contract with his own governmental agency is by reason of his marriage to his spouse who is employed by the same agency, if the spouse was employed by such agency for five or more years prior to marrying such officer or employee;
10. Contracts entered into by an officer or employee or immediate family member of an officer or

employee of a soil and water conservation district created pursuant to Article 3 (§ 10.1-506 et seq.) of Chapter 5 of Title 10.1 to participate in the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program (the Program) established in accordance with § 10.1-546.1 or to participate in other cost-share programs for the installation of best management practices to improve water quality. This subdivision shall not apply to subcontracts or other agreements entered into by an officer or employee of a soil and water conservation district to provide services for implementation of a cost-share contract established under the Program or such other cost-share programs; or

11. Contracts entered into by an officer or immediate family member of an officer of the Marine Resources Commission for goods or services for shellfish replenishment, provided that such officer or immediate family member does not participate in (i) awarding the contract, (ii) authorizing the procurement, or (iii) authorizing the use of alternate procurement methods pursuant to § 28.2-550.

B. Neither the provisions of this chapter nor, unless expressly provided otherwise, any amendments thereto shall apply to those employment contracts or renewals thereof or to any other contracts entered into prior to August 1, 1987, which were in compliance with either the former Virginia Conflict of Interests Act, Chapter 22 (§ 2.1-347 et seq.) or the former Comprehensive Conflict of Interests Act, Chapter 40 (§ 2.1-599 et seq.) of Title 2.1 at the time of their formation and thereafter. Those contracts shall continue to be governed by the provisions of the appropriate prior Act. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (f)(4) of former § 2.1-348 of Title 2.1 in effect prior to July 1, 1983, the employment by the same governmental agency of an officer or employee and spouse or any other relative residing in the same household shall not be deemed to create a material financial interest except when one of such persons is employed in a direct supervisory or administrative position, or both, with respect to such spouse or other relative residing in his household and the annual salary of such subordinate is $35,000 or more.

# Article 4. Prohibited Conduct Relating to Transactions.

## § 2.2-3111. Application.

This article proscribes certain conduct by state and local government officers and employees having a personal interest in a transaction.

## § 2.2-3112. Prohibited conduct concerning personal interest in a transaction; exceptions.

A. Each officer and employee of any state or local governmental or advisory agency who has a personal interest in a transaction shall disqualify himself from participating in the transaction if (i) the transaction has application solely to property or a business or governmental agency in which he has a personal interest or a business that has a parent-subsidiary or affiliated business entity relationship with the business in which he has a personal interest or (ii) he is unable to participate pursuant to subdivision B 1, 2, or 3. Any disqualification under the provisions of this subsection shall be recorded in the public records of the officer's or employee's governmental or advisory agency. The officer or employee shall disclose his personal interest as required by subsection E of § 2.2-3114 or subsection F of § 2.2-3115 and shall not vote or in any manner act on behalf of his agency in the transaction. The officer or employee shall be prohibited from (i) attending any portion of a closed meeting authorized by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.) when the matter in which he has a personal interest is discussed and (ii) discussing the matter in which he has a personal interest with other governmental officers or employees at any time.

B. An officer or employee of any state or local government or advisory agency who has a personal interest in a transaction may participate in the transaction:

1. If he is a member of a business, profession, occupation, or group of three or more persons the members of which are affected by the transaction, and he complies with the declaration requirements of subsection F of § 2.2-3114 or subsection H of § 2.2-3115;

2. When a party to the transaction is a client of his firm if he does not personally represent or provide services to such client and he complies with the declaration requirements of subsection G of § 2.2-3114 or subsection I of § 2.2-3115; or

3. If it affects the public generally, even though his personal interest, as a member of the public, may also be affected by that transaction.

C. Disqualification under the provisions of this section shall not prevent any employee having a personal interest in a transaction in which his agency is involved from representing himself or a member of his immediate family in such transaction provided he does not receive compensation for such representation and provided he complies with the disqualification and relevant disclosure requirements of this chapter.

D. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if disqualifications of officers or employees in accordance with this section leave less than the number required by law to act, the remaining member or members shall constitute a quorum for the conduct of business and have authority to act for the agency by majority vote, unless a unanimous vote of all members is required by law, in which case authority to act shall require a unanimous vote of remaining members. Notwithstanding any provisions of this chapter to the contrary, members of a local governing body whose sole interest in any proposed sale, contract of sale, exchange, lease or conveyance is by virtue of their employment by a business involved in a proposed sale, contract of sale, exchange, lease or conveyance, and where such member's or members' vote is essential to a constitutional majority required pursuant to Article VII, Section 9 of the Constitution of Virginia and § 15.2-2100, such member or members of the local governing body may vote and participate in the deliberations of the governing body concerning whether to approve, enter into or execute such sale, contract of sale, exchange, lease or conveyance. Official action taken under circumstances that violate this section may be rescinded by the agency on such terms as the interests of the agency and innocent third parties require.

E. The provisions of subsection A shall not prevent an officer or employee from participating in a transaction merely because such officer or employee is a party in a legal proceeding of a civil nature concerning such transaction.

F. The provisions of subsection A shall not prevent an employee from participating in a transaction regarding textbooks or other educational material for students at state institutions of higher education, when those textbooks or materials have been authored or otherwise created by the employee.

G. The provisions of this section shall not prevent any justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia, judge of the Court of Appeals of Virginia, judge of any circuit court, judge or substitute judge of any district court, member of the State Corporation Commission, or member of the Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission from participating in a transaction where such individual's participation involves the performance of adjudicative responsibilities as set forth in Canon 3 of the Canons of Judicial Conduct for the State of Virginia. However, nothing in this subsection shall be construed to authorize such individual's participation in a transaction if such participation would constitute a violation of the Canons of Judicial Conduct for the State of Virginia.

## Article 5. Disclosure Statements Required to Be Filed.

### § 2.2-3113. Application.

This article requires disclosure of certain personal and financial interests by state and local government officers and employees.

### § 2.2-3114. Disclosure by state officers and employees.

A. In accordance with the requirements set forth in § 2.2-3118.2, the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Justices of the Supreme Court, judges of the Court of Appeals, judges of any circuit court, judges and substitute judges of any district court, members of the State Corporation Commission, members of the Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission, members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board, members of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Retirement System, members of the Board of Directors of the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority, members of the Board of the Virginia College Savers Plan, and members of the Virginia Lottery Board and other persons occupying such offices or positions of trust or employment in state government, including members of the governing bodies of authorities, as may be designated by the Governor, or officers or employees of the legislative branch, as may be designated by the Joint Rules Committee of the General Assembly, shall file with the Council, as a condition to assuming office or employment, a disclosure statement of their personal interests and such other information as is required on the form prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3117 and thereafter shall file such a statement annually on or before February 1.

B. In accordance with the requirements set forth in § 2.2-3118.2, nonsalaried citizen members of all policy and supervisory boards, commissions and councils in the executive branch of state government, other than the Commonwealth Transportation Board, members of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Retirement System, members of the Board of the Virginia College

Savings Plan, and the Virginia Lottery Board, shall file with the Council, as a condition to assuming office, a disclosure form of their personal interests and such other information as is required on the form prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3118 and thereafter shall file such form annually on or before February 1. Nonsalaried citizen members of other boards, commissions and councils, including advisory boards and authorities, may be required to file a disclosure form if so designated by the Governor, in which case the form shall be that prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3118.

C. The disclosure forms required by subsections A and B shall be made available by the Council at least 30 days prior to the filing deadline. Disclosure forms shall be filed electronically with the Council in accordance with the standards approved by it pursuant to § 30-356. All forms shall be maintained as public records for five years in the office of the Council. Such forms shall be made public no later than six weeks after the filing deadline.

D. Candidates for the offices of Governor, Lieutenant Governor or Attorney General shall file a disclosure statement of their personal interests as required by § 24.2-502.

E. Any officer or employee of state government who has a personal interest in any transaction before the governmental or advisory agency of which he is an officer or employee and who is disqualified from participating in that transaction pursuant to subsection A of § 2.2-3112, or otherwise elects to disqualify himself, shall forthwith make disclosure of the existence of his interest, including the full name and address of the business and the address or parcel number for the real estate if the interest involves a business or real estate, and his disclosure shall also be reflected in the public records of the agency for five years in the office of the administrative head of the officer's or employee's governmental agency or advisory agency or, if the agency has a clerk, in the clerk's office.

F. An officer or employee of state government who is required to declare his interest pursuant to subdivision B 1 of § 2.2-3112, shall declare his interest by stating (i) the transaction involved, (ii) the nature of the officer's or employee's personal interest affected by the transaction, (iii) that he is a member of a business, profession, occupation, or group the members of which are affected by the transaction, and (iv) that he is able to participate in the transaction fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. The officer or employee shall either make his declaration orally to be recorded in written minutes for his agency or file a signed written declaration with the clerk or administrative head of his governmental or advisory agency, as appropriate, who shall, in either case, retain and make available for public inspection such declaration for a period of five years from the date of recording or receipt. If reasonable time is not available to comply with the provisions of this subsection prior to participation in the transaction, the officer or employee shall prepare and file the required declaration by the end of the next business day.

G. An officer or employee of state government who is required to declare his interest pursuant to subdivision B 2 of § 2.2-3112, shall declare his interest by stating (i) the transaction involved, (ii) that a party to the transaction is a client of his firm, (iii) that he does not personally represent or provide services to the client, and (iv) that he is able to participate in the transaction fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. The officer or employee shall either make his declaration orally to be recorded in written minutes for his agency or file a signed written declaration with the clerk or administrative head of his governmental or advisory agency, as appropriate, who shall, in either case, retain and make available for public inspection such declaration for a period of five years from the date of recording or receipt. If reasonable time is not available to comply with the provisions of this subsection prior to participation in the transaction, the officer or employee shall prepare and file the required declaration by the end of the next business day.

H. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, chairs of departments at a public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth shall not be required to file the disclosure form prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3117 or § 2.2-3118.

### § 2.2-3114.1. Filings of statements of economic interests by General Assembly members.

The filing of a current statement of economic interests by a General Assembly member, member-elect, or candidate for the General Assembly pursuant to §§ 30-110 and 30-111 of the General Assembly Conflicts of Interests Act (§ 30-100 et seq.) shall suffice for the purposes of this chapter. The Secretary of the Commonwealth may obtain from the Council a copy of the statement of a General Assembly member who is appointed to a position for which a statement is required pursuant to § 2.2-3114. No General Assembly member, member-elect, or candidate shall be required to file a separate statement of economic interests for the purposes of § 2.2-3114.

## § 2.2-3114.2. Report of gifts by certain officers and employees of state government.

The Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, and each member of the Governor's Cabinet shall file, on or before May 1, a report of gifts accepted or received by him or a member of his immediate family during the period beginning on January 1 complete through adjournment sine die of the regular session of the General Assembly. The gift report shall be on a form prescribed by the Council and shall be filed electronically with the Council in accordance with the standards approved by it pursuant to § 30-356. For purposes of this section, "adjournment sine die" means adjournment on the last legislative day of the regular session and does not include the ensuing reconvened session. Any gifts reported pursuant to this section shall not be listed on the annual disclosure form prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3117.

## § 2.2-3115. Disclosure by local government officers and employees.

A. In accordance with the requirements set forth in § 2.2-3118.2, the members of every governing body and school board of each county and city and of towns with populations in excess of 3,500 and the executive director and members of each industrial development authority and economic development authority, as created by the Industrial Development and Revenue Bond Act (§ 15.2-4900 et seq.), shall file, as a condition to assuming office or employment, a disclosure statement of their personal interests and other information as is required on the form prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3117 and thereafter shall file such a statement annually on or before February 1.

In accordance with the requirements set forth in § 2.2-3118.2, the members of the governing body of any authority established in any county or city, or part or combination thereof, and having the power to issue bonds or expend funds in excess of $10,000 in any fiscal year, other than the executive director and members of each industrial development authority and economic development authority, as created by the Industrial Development and Revenue Bond Act (§ 15.2-4900 et seq.), shall file, as a condition to assuming office, a disclosure statement of their personal interests and other information as is required on the form prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3118 and thereafter shall file such a statement annually on or before February 1, unless the governing body of the jurisdiction that appoints the members requires that the members file the form set forth in § 2.2-3117.

In accordance with the requirements set forth in § 2.2-3118.2, the members of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission shall file, as a condition to assuming office, a disclosure of their personal interests and other information as is required on the form prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3118 and thereafter shall file such a statement annually on or before February 1.

In accordance with the requirements set forth in § 2.2-3118.2, persons occupying such positions of trust appointed by governing bodies and persons occupying such positions of employment with governing bodies as may be designated to file by ordinance of the governing body shall file, as a condition to assuming office or employment, a disclosure statement of their personal interests and other information as is required on the form prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3117 and thereafter shall file such a statement annually on or before February 1.

In accordance with the requirements set forth in § 2.2-3118.2, persons occupying such positions of trust appointed by school boards and persons occupying such positions of employment with school boards as may be designated to file by an adopted policy of the school board shall file, as a condition to assuming office or employment, a disclosure statement of their personal interests and other information as is required on the form prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3117 and thereafter shall file such a statement annually on or before February 1.

B. In accordance with the requirements set forth in § 2.2-3118.2, nonsalaried citizen members of local boards, commissions and councils as may be designated by the governing body shall file, as a condition to assuming office, a disclosure form of their personal interests and such other information as is required on the form prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3118 and thereafter shall file such form annually on or before February 1.

C. No person shall be mandated to file any disclosure not otherwise required by this article.

D. The disclosure forms required by subsections A and B shall be made available by the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council at least 30 days prior to the filing deadline, and the clerks of the governing body and school board shall distribute the forms to designated individuals at least 20 days prior to the filing deadline. Forms shall be filed and maintained as public records for five years in the office of the clerk of the respective governing body or school board. Forms

filed by members of governing bodies of authorities shall be filed and maintained as public records for five years in the office of the clerk of the governing body of the county or city. Such forms shall be made public no later than six weeks after the filing deadline.

E. Candidates for membership in the governing body or school board of any county, city or town with a population of more than 3,500 persons shall file a disclosure statement of their personal interests as required by § 24.2-502.

F. Any officer or employee of local government who has a personal interest in any transaction before the governmental or advisory agency of which he is an officer or employee and who is disqualified from participating in that transaction pursuant to subsection A of § 2.2-3112 or otherwise elects to disqualify himself, shall forthwith make disclosure of the existence of his interest, including the full name and address of the business and the address or parcel number for the real estate if the interest involves a business or real estate, and his disclosure shall be reflected in the public records of the agency for five years in the office of the administrative head of the officer's or employee's governmental or advisory agency.

G. In addition to any disclosure required by subsections A and B, in each county and city and in towns with populations in excess of 3,500, members of planning commissions, boards of zoning appeals, real estate assessors, and all county, city and town managers or executive officers shall make annual disclosures of all their interests in real estate located in the county, city or town in which they are elected, appointed, or employed. Such disclosure shall include any business in which such persons own an interest, or from which income is received, if the primary purpose of the business is to own, develop or derive compensation through the sale, exchange or development of real estate in the county, city or town. In accordance with the requirements set forth in § 2.2-3118.2, such disclosure shall be filed as a condition to assuming office or employment, and thereafter shall be filed annually with the clerk of the governing body of such county, city, or town on or before February 1. Such disclosures shall be filed and maintained as public records for five years. Such forms shall be made public no later than six weeks after the filing deadline. Forms for the filing of such reports shall be made available by the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council to the clerk of each governing body.

H. An officer or employee of local government who is required to declare his interest pursuant to subdivision B 1 of § 2.2-3112 shall declare his interest by stating (i) the transaction involved, (ii) the nature of the officer's or employee's personal interest affected by the transaction, (iii) that he is a member of a business, profession, occupation, or group the members of which are affected by the transaction, and (iv) that he is able to participate in the transaction fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. The officer or employee shall either make his declaration orally to be recorded in written minutes for his agency or file a signed written declaration with the clerk or administrative head of his governmental or advisory agency, as appropriate, who shall, in either case, retain and make available for public inspection such declaration for a period of five years from the date of recording or receipt. If reasonable time is not available to comply with the provisions of this subsection prior to participation in the transaction, the officer or employee shall prepare and file the required declaration by the end of the next business day. The officer or employee shall also orally disclose the existence of the interest during each meeting of the governmental or advisory agency at which the transaction is discussed and such disclosure shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

I. An officer or employee of local government who is required to declare his interest pursuant to subdivision B 2 of § 2.2-3112, shall declare his interest by stating (i) the transaction involved, (ii) that a party to the transaction is a client of his firm, (iii) that he does not personally represent or provide services to the client, and (iv) that he is able to participate in the transaction fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. The officer or employee shall either make his declaration orally to be recorded in written minutes for his agency or file a signed written declaration with the clerk or administrative head of his governmental or advisory agency, as appropriate, who shall, in either case, retain and make available for public inspection such declaration for a period of five years from the date of recording or receipt. If reasonable time is not available to comply with the provisions of this subsection prior to participation in the transaction, the officer or employee shall prepare and file the required declaration by the end of the next business day.

J. The clerk of the governing body or school board that releases any form to the public pursuant to this section shall redact from the form any residential address, personal telephone number, email address, or signature contained on such form; however, any form filed pursuant to subsection G shall not have any residential addresses redacted.

### § 2.2-3116. Disclosure by certain constitutional officers.

For the purposes of this chapter, holders of the constitutional offices of treasurer, sheriff, attorney for the Commonwealth, clerk of the circuit court, and commissioner of the revenue of each county and city shall be required to file with the Council, as a condition to assuming office, the Statement of Economic Interests prescribed by the Council pursuant to § 2.2-3117. These officers shall file statements annually on or before February 1. Candidates shall file statements as required by § 24.2-502. Statements shall be filed electronically with the Council in accordance with the standards approved by it pursuant to § 30-356. These officers shall be subject to the prohibition on certain gifts set forth in subsection B of § 2.2-3103.1.

### § 2.2-3117. Disclosure form.

The disclosure form to be used for filings required by subsections A and D of § 2.2-3114 and subsections A and E of § 2.2-3115 shall be prescribed by the Council. Except as otherwise provided in § 2.2-3115, all completed forms shall be filed electronically with the Council in accordance with the standards approved by it pursuant to § 30-356. Any person who knowingly and intentionally makes a false statement of a material fact on the Statement of Economic Interests is guilty of a Class 5 felony.

### § 2.2-3118. Disclosure form; certain citizen members.

The financial disclosure form to be used for filings required pursuant to subsection B of § 2.2-3114 and subsection B of § 2.2-3115 shall be filed in accordance with the provisions of § 30-356. The financial disclosure form shall be prescribed by the Council. Except as otherwise provided in § 2.2-3115, all completed forms shall be filed electronically with the Council in accordance with the standards approved by it pursuant to § 30-356.

### § 2.2-3118.1. Special provisions for individuals serving in or seeking multiple positions or offices; reappointees.

A. The filing of a single current statement of economic interests by an individual required to file the form prescribed in § 2.2-3117 shall suffice for the purposes of this chapter as filing for all positions or offices held or sought by such individual during the course of a calendar year. The filing of a single current financial disclosure statement by an individual required to file the form prescribed in § 2.2-3118 shall suffice for the purposes of this chapter as filing for all positions or offices held or sought by such individual and requiring the filing of the § 2.2-3118 form during the course of a calendar year.

B. Any individual who has met the requirement for annually filing a statement provided in § 2.2-3117 or 2.2-3118 shall not be required to file an additional statement upon such individual's reappointment to the same office or position for which he is required to file, provided such reappointment occurs within 12 months after filing such annual statement.

### § 2.2-3118.2. Disclosure form; filing requirements.

A. An officer or employee required to file an annual disclosure on or before February 1 pursuant to this article shall disclose his personal interests and other information as required on the form prescribed by the Council for the preceding calendar year complete through December 31. An officer or employee required to file a disclosure as a condition to assuming office or employment shall file such disclosure on or before the day such office or position of employment is assumed and disclose his personal interests and other information as required on the form prescribed by the Council for the preceding 12-month period complete through the last day of the month immediately preceding the month in which the office or position of employment is assumed; however, any officer or employee who assumes office or a position of employment in January shall be required to only file an annual disclosure on or before February 1 for the preceding calendar year complete through December 31.

B. When the deadline for filing any disclosure pursuant to this article falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the deadline for filing shall be the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday.

## Article 6. School Boards and Employees of School Boards.

### § 2.2-3119. Additional provisions applicable to school boards and employees of school boards; exceptions.

A. Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, it shall be unlawful for the school board of any county or city or of any town constituting a separate school division to employ or pay any teacher or other school board employee from the public funds, federal, state or local, or for a division superintendent to recommend to the school board the employment of any

teacher or other employee, if the teacher or other employee is the father, mother, brother, sister, spouse, son, daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law or brother-in-law of the superintendent, or of any member of the school board.

This section shall apply to any person employed by any school board in the operation of the public free school system, adult education programs or any other program maintained and operated by a local county, city or town school board.

B. This section shall not be construed to prohibit the employment, promotion, or transfer within a school division of any person within a relationship described in subsection A when such person:

1. Has been employed pursuant to a written contract with a school board or employed as a substitute teacher or teacher's aide by a school board prior to the taking of office of any member of such board or division superintendent of schools; or
2. Has been employed pursuant to a written contract with a school board or employed as a substitute teacher or teacher's aide by a school board prior to the inception of such relationship; or
3. Was employed by a school board at any time prior to June 10, 1994, and had been employed at any time as a teacher or other employee of any Virginia school board prior to the taking of office of any member of such school board or division superintendent of schools.

C. A person employed as a substitute teacher may not be employed to any greater extent than he was employed by the school board in the last full school year prior to the taking of office of such board member or division superintendent or to the inception of such relationship. The exceptions in subdivisions B 1, B 2, and B 3 shall apply only if the prior employment has been in the same school divisions where the employee and the superintendent or school board member now seek to serve simultaneously.

D. If any member of the school board or any division superintendent knowingly violates these provisions, he shall be personally liable to refund to the local treasury any amounts paid in violation of this law, and the funds shall be recovered from the individual by action or suit in the name of the Commonwealth on the petition of the attorney for the Commonwealth. Recovered funds shall be paid into the local treasury for the use of the public schools.

E. The provisions of this section shall not apply to employment by any school district of the father, mother, brother, sister, spouse, son, daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, or brother-in-law of any member of the school board, provided that (i) the member certifies that he had no involvement with the hiring decision and (ii) the superintendent certifies to the remaining members of the governing body in writing that the employment is based upon merit and fitness and the competitive rating of the qualifications of the individual and that no member of the board had any involvement with the hiring decision.

F. The provisions of this section shall not apply to the employment by any school district of the father, mother, brother, sister, spouse, son, daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, or brother-in-law of any division superintendent, provided that (i) the superintendent certifies that he had no involvement with the hiring decision and (ii) the assistant superintendent certifies to the members of the governing body in writing that the employment is based upon merit and fitness and the competitive rating of the qualifications of the individual and that the superintendent of the division had no involvement with the hiring decision.

## Article 7. Penalties and Remedies.

### § 2.2-3120. Knowing violation of chapter a misdemeanor.

Any person who knowingly violates any of the provisions of Articles 2 through 6 (§§ 2.2-3102 through 2.2-3119) of this chapter shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor, except that any member of a local governing body who knowingly violates subsection A of § 2.2-3112 or subsection D or F of § 2.2-3115 shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor. A knowing violation under this section is one in which the person engages in conduct, performs an act or refuses to perform an act when he knows that the conduct is prohibited or required by this chapter.

### § 2.2-3121. Advisory opinions.

A. A state officer or employee shall not be prosecuted for a knowing violation of this chapter if the alleged violation resulted from his good faith reliance on a written opinion of the Attorney General or a formal opinion or written informal advice of the Council made in response to his written request for such opinion or advice and the opinion or advice was made after a full disclosure of the facts regardless of whether such opinion or advice is later withdrawn provided the alleged violation occurred prior to the withdrawal of the opinion or advice.

B. A local officer or employee shall not be prosecuted for a knowing violation of this chapter if the alleged violation resulted from his good faith reliance on a written opinion of the attorney for the Commonwealth or a formal opinion or written informal advice of the Council made in response to his written request for such opinion or advice and the opinion or advice was made after a full disclosure of the facts regardless of whether such opinion or advice is later withdrawn, provided that the alleged violation occurred prior to the withdrawal of the opinion or advice. The written opinion of the attorney for the Commonwealth shall be a public record and shall be released upon request.

C. If any officer or employee serving at the local level of government is charged with a knowing violation of this chapter, and the alleged violation resulted from his reliance upon a written opinion of his county, city, or town attorney, made after a full disclosure of the facts, that such action was not in violation of this chapter, then the officer or employee shall have the right to introduce a copy of the opinion at his trial as evidence that he did not knowingly violate this chapter.

### § 2.2-3122. Knowing violation of chapter constitutes malfeasance in office or employment.

Any person who knowingly violates any of the provisions of this chapter shall be guilty of malfeasance in office or employment. Upon conviction thereof, the judge or jury trying the case, in addition to any other fine or penalty provided by law, may order the forfeiture of such office or employment.

### § 2.2-3123. Invalidation of contract; recision of sales.

A. Any contract made in violation of § 2.2-3103 or §§ 2.2-3106 through 2.2-3109 may be declared void and may be rescinded by the governing body of the contracting or selling governmental agency within five years of the date of such contract. In cases in which the contract is invalidated, the contractor shall retain or receive only the reasonable value, with no increment for profit or commission, of the property or services furnished prior to the date of receiving notice that the contract has been voided. In cases of recision of a contract of sale, any refund or restitution shall be made to the contracting or selling governmental agency.

B. Any purchase by an officer or employee made in violation of § 2.2-3103 or §§ 2.2-3106 through 2.2-3109 may be rescinded by the governing body of the contracting or selling governmental agency within five years of the date of such purchase.

### § 2.2-3124. Civil penalty from violation of this chapter.

A. In addition to any other fine or penalty provided by law, an officer or employee who knowingly violates any provision of §§ 2.2-3103 through 2.2-3112 shall be subject to a civil penalty in an amount equal to the amount of money or thing of value received as a result of such violation. If the thing of value received by the officer or employee in violation of §§ 2.2-3103 through 2.2-3112 increases in value between the time of the violation and the time of discovery of the violation, the greater value shall determine the amount of the civil penalty. Further, all money or other things of value received as a result of such violation shall be forfeited in accordance with the provisions of § 19.2-386.33.

B. An officer or employee required to file the disclosure form prescribed by § 2.2-3117 who fails to file such form within the time period prescribed shall be assessed a civil penalty in an amount equal to $250. The Council shall notify the Attorney General of any state officer's or employee's failure to file the required form and the Attorney General shall assess and collect the civil penalty. The clerk of the school board or the clerk of the governing body of the county, city, or town shall notify the attorney for the Commonwealth for the locality in which the officer or employee was elected or is employed of any local officer's or employee's failure to file the required form and the attorney for the Commonwealth shall assess and collect the civil penalty. The Council shall notify the Attorney General and the clerk shall notify the attorney for the Commonwealth within 30 days of the deadline for filing. All civil penalties collected pursuant to this subsection shall be deposited into the general fund and used exclusively to fund the Council.

### § 2.2-3125. Limitation of actions.

The statute of limitations for the criminal prosecution of a person for violation of any provision of this chapter shall be one year from the time the Attorney General, if the violation is by a state officer or employee, or the attorney for the Commonwealth, if the violation is by a local officer or employee, has actual knowledge of the violation or five years from the date of the violation, whichever event occurs first. Any prosecution for malfeasance in office shall be governed by the statute of limitations provided by law.

### § 2.2-3126. Enforcement.

A. The provisions of this chapter relating to an officer or employee serving at the state level of government shall be enforced by the Attorney General.

In addition to any other powers and duties prescribed by law, the Attorney General shall have the following powers and duties within the area for which he is responsible under this section:

1. He shall advise the agencies of state government and officers and employees serving at the state level of government on appropriate procedures for complying with the requirements of this chapter. He may review any disclosure statements, without notice to the affected person, for the purpose of determining satisfactory compliance, and shall investigate matters that come to his attention reflecting possible violations of the provisions of this chapter by officers and employees serving at the state level of government;
2. If he determines that there is a reasonable basis to conclude that any officer or employee serving at the state level of government has knowingly violated any provision of this chapter, he shall designate an attorney for the Commonwealth who shall have complete and independent discretion in the prosecution of such officer or employee;
3. He shall render advisory opinions to any state officer or employee who seeks advice as to whether the facts in a particular case would constitute a violation of the provisions of this chapter. He shall determine which opinions or portions thereof are of general interest to the public and may, from time to time, be published.

Irrespective of whether an opinion of the Attorney General has been requested and rendered, any person has the right to seek a declaratory judgment or other judicial relief as provided by law.

B. The provisions of this chapter relating to an officer or employee serving at the local level of government shall be enforced by the attorney for the Commonwealth within the political subdivision for which he is elected.

Each attorney for the Commonwealth shall be responsible for prosecuting violations by an officer or employee serving at the local level of government and, if the Attorney General designates such attorney for the Commonwealth, violations by an officer or employee serving at the state level of government. In the event the violation by an officer or employee serving at the local level of government involves more than one local jurisdiction, the Attorney General shall designate which of the attorneys for the Commonwealth of the involved local jurisdictions shall enforce the provisions of this chapter with regard to such violation.

Each attorney for the Commonwealth shall establish an appropriate written procedure for implementing the disclosure requirements of local officers and employees of his county, city or town, and for other political subdivisions, whose principal offices are located within the jurisdiction served by such attorney for the Commonwealth. The attorney for the Commonwealth shall provide a copy of this act to all local officers and employees in the jurisdiction served by such attorney who are required to file a disclosure statement pursuant to Article 5 (§ 2.2-3113 et seq.) of this chapter. Failure to receive a copy of the act shall not be a defense to such officers and employees if they are prosecuted for violations of the act.

Each attorney for the Commonwealth shall render advisory opinions as to whether the facts in a particular case would constitute a violation of the provisions of this chapter to the governing body and any local officer or employee in his jurisdiction and to political subdivisions other than a county, city or town, including regional political subdivisions whose principal offices are located within the jurisdiction served by such attorney for the Commonwealth. If the advisory opinion is written, then such written opinion shall be a public record and shall be released upon request. In case the opinion given by the attorney for the Commonwealth indicates that the facts would constitute a violation, the officer or employee affected thereby may request that the Attorney General review the opinion. A conflicting opinion by the Attorney General shall act to revoke the opinion of the attorney for the Commonwealth. The Attorney General shall determine which of his reviewing opinions or portions thereof are of general interest to the public and may, from time to time, be published.

Irrespective of whether an opinion of the attorney for the Commonwealth or the Attorney General has been requested and rendered, any person has the right to seek a declaratory judgment or other judicial relief as provided by law.

### § 2.2-3127. Venue.

Any prosecution for a violation involving an officer serving at the state level of government shall be brought in the Circuit Court of the City of Richmond. Any prosecution for a violation involving an employee serving at the state level of government shall be within the jurisdiction in which the employee has his principal place of state employment.

Any proceeding provided in this chapter shall be brought in a court of competent jurisdiction within the county or city in which the violation occurs if the violation involves an officer or employee serving at the local level of government.

## Article 8. Orientation for State Filers.

### § 2.2-3128. Semiannual orientation course.

Each state agency shall offer at least semiannually to each of its state filers an orientation course on this chapter, on ethics in public contracting pursuant to Article 6 (§ 2.2-4367 et seq.) of Chapter 43 of this title, if applicable to the filer, and on any other applicable regulations that govern the official conduct of state officers and employees.

### § 2.2-3129. Records of attendance.

Each state agency shall maintain records indicating the specific attendees, each attendee's job title, and dates of their attendance for each orientation course offered pursuant to § 2.2-3128 for a period of not less than five years after each course is given. These records shall be public records subject to inspection and copying consistent with § 2.2-3704.

### § 2.2-3130. Attendance requirements.

Except as set forth in § 2.2-3131, each state filer shall attend the orientation course required in § 2.2-3128, as follows:

1. For a state filer who holds a position with the agency on January 1, 2004, not later than December 31, 2004 and, thereafter, at least once during each consecutive period of two calendar years commencing on January 1, 2006.
2. For a person who becomes a state filer with the agency after January 1, 2004, within two months after he or she becomes a state filer and at least once during each consecutive period of two calendar years commencing on the first odd-numbered year thereafter.

### § 2.2-3131. Exemptions.

A. The requirements of § 2.2-3130 shall not apply to state filers with a state agency who have taken an equivalent ethics orientation course through another state agency within the time periods set forth in subdivision 1 or 2 of § 2.2-3130, as applicable.

B. State agencies may jointly conduct and state filers from more than one state agency may jointly attend an orientation course required by § 2.2-3128, as long as the course content is relevant to the official duties of the attending state filers.

C. Before conducting each orientation course required by § 2.2-3128, state agencies shall consult with the Attorney General and the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council regarding appropriate course content.

### §2.2-3132. Training on prohibited conduct and conflicts of interest.

A. The Council shall provide training sessions for local elected officials, the members of appointed school boards, and the executive directors and members of industrial development authorities and economic development authorities, as created by the Industrial Development and Revenue Bond Act (§ 15.2-4900 et seq.), on the provisions of the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act (§ 2.2-3100 et seq.). The Council may provide such training sessions by online means.

B. Each local elected official and member of an appointed school board, and the executive director and members of each industrial development authority and economic development authority, as created by the Industrial Development and Revenue Bond Act, shall complete the training session described in subsection A within two months after assuming the local office and thereafter at least once during each consecutive period of two calendar years while he holds such office, commencing with the date on which he last completed a training session. No penalty shall be imposed on a local elected official, a member of an appointed school board, or an executive director or member of an industrial development authority or an economic development authority for failing to complete a training session.

C. The clerk of the respective governing body or school board shall maintain records indicating local elected officials, members of appointed school boards, and executive directors and members of industrial development authorities and economic development authorities subject to the training requirement and the dates of their completion of a training session pursuant to subsection B. Such records shall be maintained as public records for five years in the office of the clerk of the respective governing body or school board.

## Title 2.2. Administration of Government. Chapter 43.

### From the Virginia Public Procurement Act

### § 2.2-4369. Proscribed participation by public employees in procurement transactions.

Except as may be specifically allowed by subdivisions B 1, 2, and 3 of § 2.2-3112, no public employee having official responsibility for a procurement transaction shall participate in that transaction on behalf of the public body when the employee knows that:

1. The employee is contemporaneously employed by a bidder, offeror or contractor involved in the procurement transaction;
2. The employee, the employee's partner, or any member of the employee's immediate family holds a position with a bidder, offeror or contractor such as an officer, director, trustee, partner or the like, or is employed in a capacity involving personal and substantial participation in the procurement transaction, or owns or controls an interest of more than five percent;
3. The employee, the employee's partner, or any member of the employee's immediate family has a pecuniary interest arising from the procurement transaction; or
4. The employee, the employee's partner, or any member of the employee's immediate family is negotiating, or has an arrangement concerning, prospective employment with a bidder, offeror or contractor.

# Title 24.2. Elections. Chapter 5. Candidates for Office.

### § 24.2-502. Statement of economic interests as requirement of candidacy.

It shall be a requirement of candidacy that a written statement of economic interests shall be filed by (i) a candidate for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or Attorney General and a candidate for the Senate or House of Delegates with the State Board, (ii) a candidate for a constitutional office with the general registrar for the county or city, and (iii) a candidate for member of the governing body or elected school board of any county, city, or town with a population in excess of 3,500 persons with the general registrar for the county or city. The statement of economic interests shall be that specified in § 30-111 for candidates for the General Assembly and in § 2.2-3117 for all other candidates. The foregoing requirement shall not apply to a candidate for reelection to the same office who has met the requirement of annually filing a statement pursuant to § 2.2-3114, § 2.2-3115, § 2.2-3116, or § 30-110.

The general registrar, the clerk of the local governing body, or the clerk of the school board, as appropriate, shall transmit to the local electoral board, immediately after the filing deadline, a list of the candidates who have filed initial or annual statements of economic interests.

# Title 30. General Assembly. Chapter 56.

## Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council

### § 30-355. Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council; membership; terms; quorum; expenses.

A. The Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council (the Council) is hereby created as an advisory council in the legislative branch to encourage and facilitate compliance with the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act (§ 2.2-3100 et seq.) and the General Assembly Conflicts of Interests Act (§ 30-100 et seq.)(hereafter the Acts) and the lobbying laws in Article 3 (§ 2.2-418 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 2.2 (hereafter Article 3).

B. The Council shall consist of nine members as follows: three members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates, two of whom shall be members of the House of Delegates and one of whom shall be a former judge of a court of record; three members appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, two of whom shall be members of the Senate and one of whom shall be a former judge of a court of record; and three members appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be a current or former executive branch employee, one of whom shall be appointed from a list of three nominees submitted by the Virginia Association of Counties, and one of whom shall be appointed from a list of three nominees submitted by the Virginia Municipal League. In the appointment to the Council of members of the House of Delegates made by the Speaker and members of the Senate made by the Senate Committee on Rules, equal representation shall be given to each of the political parties having the highest and next highest number of members elected to their respective body. All members of the Council are subject to confirmation by the General Assembly by a majority vote in each house of (i) the members present of the majority party and (ii) the members present of the minority party.

C. All appointments following the initial staggering of terms shall be for terms of four years, except that appointments to fill vacancies shall be for the unexpired terms in the same manner as the original appointment. No nonlegislative citizen member shall be eligible to serve for more than two successive four-year terms. However, after the expiration of a term of three years or less, or after the expiration of the remainder of a term to which appointed to fill a vacancy, two additional terms may be served by such member if ap-

pointed thereto. Legislative members and other state government officials shall serve terms coincident with their terms of office. Legislative members may be reappointed for successive terms.

D. The members of the Council shall elect from among their membership a chairman and a vice-chairman for two-year terms. The chairman and vice-chairman may not succeed themselves to the same position. The Council shall hold meetings upon the call of the chairman or whenever the majority of the members so request. A majority of the Council appointed shall constitute a quorum.

E. Members of the Council shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813, 2.2-2825, and 30-19.12, as appropriate. Funding for expenses of the members shall be provided from existing appropriations to the Council.

## § 30-356. Powers and duties of the Council.

The Council shall:

1. Prescribe the forms required for complying with the disclosure requirements of Article 3 and the Acts. These forms shall be the only forms used to comply with the provisions of Article 3 or the Acts. The Council shall make available the disclosure forms and shall provide guidance and other instructions to assist in the completion of the forms;
2. Review all disclosure forms filed by lobbyists pursuant to Article 3 and by state government officers and employees and legislators pursuant to the Acts. The Council may review disclosure forms for completeness, including reviewing the information contained on the face of the form to determine if the disclosure form has been fully completed and comparing the disclosures contained in any disclosure form filed by a lobbyist pursuant to § 2.2-426 with other disclosure forms filed with the Council, and requesting any amendments to ensure the completeness of and correction of errors in the forms, if necessary. If a disclosure form is found to have not been filed or to have been incomplete as filed, the Council shall notify the filer in writing and direct the filer to file a completed disclosure form within a prescribed period of time, and such notification shall be confidential and is excluded from the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.);
3. Require all disclosure forms and lobbyist registration statements that are required to be filed with the Council to be filed electronically in accordance with the standards approved by the Council. The Council shall provide software or electronic access for filing the required disclosure forms and registration statements without charge to all individuals required to file with the Council. The Council shall prescribe the method of execution and certification of electronically filed forms, including the use of an electronic signature as authorized by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (§ 59.1-479 et seq.). The Council may grant extensions as provided in § 30-356.2 and may authorize a designee to grant such extensions;
4. Accept and review any statement received from a filer disputing the receipt by such filer of a gift that has been disclosed on the form filed by a lobbyist pursuant to Article 3;
5. Beginning July 1, 2016, establish and maintain a searchable electronic database comprising those disclosure forms that are filed with the Council pursuant to §§ 2.2-426, § 2.2-3117, § 2.2-3118, and 30-111. Such database shall be available to the public through the Council's official website;
6. Furnish, upon request, formal advisory opinions or guidelines and other appropriate information, including informal advice, regarding ethics, conflicts issues arising under Article 3 or the Acts, or a person's duties under Article 3 or the Acts to any person covered by Article 3 or the Acts or to any agency of state or local government, in an expeditious manner. The Council may authorize a designee to furnish formal opinions or informal advice. Formal advisory opinions are public record and shall be published on the Council's website; however, no formal advisory opinion furnished by a designee of the Council shall be available to the public or published until such opinion has been approved by the Council. Published formal advisory opinions may have such deletions and changes as may be necessary to protect the identity of the person involved or other persons supplying information. Informal advice given by the Council or the Council's designee is confidential and is excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.); however, if the recipient invokes the immunity provisions of § 2.2-3121 or 30-124, the record of

the request and the informal advice given shall be deemed to be a public record and shall be released upon request. Other records relating to formal advisory opinions or informal advice, including records of requests, notes, correspondence, and draft versions of such opinions or advice, shall also be confidential and excluded from the mandatory disclosure provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act;

7. Conduct training seminars and educational programs for lobbyists, state and local government officers and employees, legislators, and other interested persons on the requirements of Article 3 and the Acts and provide training sessions for local elected officials in compliance with Article 9 (§ 2.2-3132) of Chapter 31 of Title 2.2 and ethics orientation sessions for legislators in compliance with Article 6 (§ 30-129.1 et seq.) of Chapter 13;

8. Approve orientation courses conducted pursuant to § 2.2-3128 and, upon request, review the educational materials and approve any training or course on the requirements of Article 3 and the Acts conducted for state and local government officers and employees;

9. Publish such educational materials as it deems appropriate on the provisions of Article 3 and the Acts;

10. Review actions taken in the General Assembly with respect to the discipline of its members for the purpose of offering nonbinding advice;

11. Request from any agency of state or local government such assistance, services, and information as will enable the Council to effectively carry out its responsibilities. Information provided to the Council by an agency of state or local government shall not be released to any other party unless authorized by such agency;

12. Redact from any document or form that is to be made available to the public any residential address, personal telephone number, email address, or signature contained on that document or form; and

13. Report on or before December 1 of each year on its activities and findings regarding Article 3 and the Acts, including recommendations for changes in the laws, to the General Assembly and the Governor. The annual report shall be submitted by the chairman as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be published as a state document.

## § 30-356.1. Request for approval for certain travel.

A. The Council shall receive and review a request for the approval of travel submitted by a person required to file the disclosure form prescribed in § § 2.2-3117 or 30-111 to accept any travel-related transportation, lodging, hospitality, food or beverage, or other thing of value that has a value exceeding $100 where such approval is required pursuant to subsection G of § 2.2-3103.1 or subsection F of § 30-103.1. A request for the approval of travel shall not be required for the following, but such travel shall be disclosed as may be required by the Acts:

1. Travel disclosed pursuant to the Campaign Finance Disclosure Act (§ 24.2-945 et seq.);

2. Travel paid for or provided by the government of the United States, any of its territories, or any state or any political subdivision of such state;

3. Travel provided to facilitate attendance by a legislator at a regular or special session of the General Assembly, a meeting of a legislative committee or commission, or a national conference where attendance is approved by the House Committee on Rules or its Chairman or the Senate Committee on Rules or its Chairman; or

4. Travel related to an official meeting of the Commonwealth, its political subdivisions, or any board, commission, authority, or other entity, or any charitable organization established pursuant to § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code affiliated with such entity, to which such person has been appointed or elected or is a member by virtue of his office or employment.

B. When reviewing a request for the approval of travel, the Council shall consider the purpose of the travel as it relates to the official duties of the requester. The Council shall approve any request for travel that bears a reasonable relationship between the purpose of the travel and the official duties of the requester. Such travel shall include any meeting, conference, or other event (i) composed primarily of public officials, (ii) at which public policy related to the duties of the requester will be discussed in a substantial manner, (iii) reasonably expected to educate the requester on issues relevant to his official duties or to enhance the requester's knowledge and skills relative to his official duties, or (iv) at which the requester has been invited to speak regarding matters reasonably related to the requester's official duties.

C. The Council shall not approve any travel requests that bear no reasonable relationship between the

purpose of the proposed travel and the official duties of the requester. In making such determination, the Council shall consider the duration of travel, the destination of travel, the estimated value of travel, and any previous or recurring travel.

D. Within five business days of receipt of a request for the approval of travel, the Council shall grant or deny the request, unless additional information has been requested. If additional information has been requested, the Council shall grant or deny the request for the approval within five business days of receipt of such information. If the Council has not granted or denied the request for approval of travel or requested additional information within such five-day period, such travel shall be deemed to have been approved by the Council. Nothing in this subsection shall preclude a person from amending or resubmitting a request for the approval of travel. The Council may authorize a designee to review and grant or deny requests for the approval of travel.

E. A request for the approval of travel shall be on a form prescribed by the Council and made available on its website. Such form may be submitted by electronic means, facsimile, in-person submission, or mail or commercial mail delivery.

F. No person shall be prosecuted, assessed a civil penalty, or otherwise disciplined for acceptance of a travel-related thing of value if he accepted the travel-related thing of value after receiving approval under this section, regardless of whether such approval is later withdrawn, provided the travel occurred prior to the withdrawal of the approval.

## § 30-356.2. Right to grant extensions in special circumstances; civil penalty.

A. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any person required to file the disclosure form prescribed in Article 3 or the Acts shall be entitled to an extension where good cause for granting such an extension has been shown, as determined by the Council. Good cause shall include:

1. The death of a relative of the filer, as relative is defined in the definition of "gift" in Article 3 or the Acts.
2. A state of emergency is declared by the Governor pursuant to Chapter 3.2 (§ 44-146.13 et seq.) of Title 44 or declared by the President of the United States or the governor of another state pursuant to law and confirmed by the Governor by an executive order, and such an emergency interferes with the timely filing of disclosure forms. The extension shall be granted only for those filers in areas affected by such emergency.
3. The filer is a member of a uniformed service of the United States and is on active duty on the date of the filing deadline.
4. A failure of the electronic filing system and the failure of such system prevents the timely filing of disclosure forms.

B. For any person who is unable to timely file the disclosure form prescribed in the Acts due to the disclosure form not being made available to him until after the deadline has passed, the Council shall grant such person a five-day extension upon request. The head of the agency for which the person works or the clerk of the school board or governing body of the locality that was responsible for providing the disclosure form to such person shall be assessed a civil penalty in the amount equal to $250, to be collected in accordance with the procedure set forth in subsection B of § 2.2-3124. If the disclosure form is provided to the person within three days prior to the filing deadline, the Council shall grant such person a three-day extension upon request and no civil penalties shall be assessed against the head of such person's agency or the clerk.

C. The provisions of this section shall not apply to any statement of economic interests filed as a requirement of candidacy pursuant to § 24.2-502.

## § 30-357. Staff.

Staff assistance to the Council shall be provided by the Division of Legislative Services. Staff shall perform those duties assigned to it by the Council, including those duties enumerated in § 30-356. The Division of Legislative Services shall employ an executive director, who shall be subject to the confirmation of the Joint Committee on Rules.

## § 30-358. Cooperation of agencies of state and local government.

Every department, division, board, bureau, commission, authority, or political subdivision of the Commonwealth shall cooperate with, and provide such assistance to, the Council as the Council may request.

# Virginia Public Records Act Requirements


## By Jeffrey S. Gore and Roger C. Wiley
## Hefty Wiley & Gore PC


Local government officials generally are not enthusiastic about the Virginia Public Records Act (the "Act"). Many elected officials are only vaguely aware that the Act exists. Managers and agency heads are likely to view it as just another nuisance requirement imposed by the state or even as an example of that most despised species – an unfunded mandate. Other local officials may be puzzled about how to handle the masses of paper that clutter their offices or the electronic messages and documents that fill up their email inboxes and hard drives.

All those reactions are predictable and sometimes they may seem valid. Certainly, the state is not sending localities money to spend on records management. Most of the Act's requirements, however, merely reflect what would be viewed as good business and management practice. No organization can really operate efficiently if it can't determine what it did last month, last year, or 10 years ago.

Dependence on one's own memory of past events can be very risky, and although most organizations have a few long-serving individuals who provide some "institutional memory," all of them move on eventually.

Keeping records and maintaining them in an accessible manner is vital not only for those who come along later, but for our own daily performance.

Having an effective system for keeping the records that are important and getting rid of those that are no longer needed, to make room for new ones, is just common sense. Still, it is easy to neglect records management. Getting today's work done can always claim priority over organizing and storing records of yesterday's work. Some of us are instinctively good at file maintenance while others need to be prodded.

The more positive way to view the Public Records Act is that, by imposing some legal requirements, it forces us to think about records management and assign it as a specific task to someone in our organization. The Act's legal mandate also gives officials a justification for budgeting and spending the resources necessary to make a records management system function properly.

We hope that this handbook will give local government officials a basic understanding of the Virginia Public Records Act and how to comply with it. In its opening section you will find a discussion of the Act's basic requirements, presented in question and answer format, followed by several appendices that contain additional detailed information, as shown in the Table of Contents.

### What is the purpose of the Virginia Public Records Act?

Virginia Public Records Act (the "Act") is found in Chapter 7 of Title 42.1 of the Code of Virginia, the Title dealing with "Libraries." It is in that part of the Code because the Library of Virginia is the state agency designated to administer the Act and issue regulations to implement it. The Act establishes the basic rules and authorizes the Library to issue more detailed regulations specifying how state and local public agencies, officials, and employees handle "public records." This includes determining exactly what constitutes a public record, how and how long to maintain that public record, and when and how to eventually dispose of it – all of which the Act describes as the "lifecycle" of the public record.

### What is a public record?

As defined in the Act, a public record is any recorded information possessed by a public agency, public official or public employee that documents a transaction or activity by or with any such agency, official or employee. The recorded information is a public record if it is produced, collected, received or retained in connection with the transaction of public business, regardless of its physical form. The medium (paper, film, magnetic or electronic file, etc.) on which the information is recorded has no bearing on whether it is a public record.

### What local agencies officials are covered by the Act's requirements? Does it also apply to elected constitutional officers?

The Act applies to all departments, divisions, boards, commissions, and authorities of a locality or in which a locality participates to conduct public business.

Officers and employees of these various local agencies have a responsibility to comply the Act's requirements for the records they create or receive.

Elected city and county constitutional officers and the staffs and records of their offices are specifically included in the definitions of covered officials and agencies.

## What about members of a local governing body?

Members of a city or town council, or county board of supervisors, regardless of their terms or compensation, are officers of the locality and are thus subject to the Act's requirement. In the past, many of them have not treated their individual correspondence and other records about public business, kept at home or in their private places of employment, as public records.

Legally, however, the Act does apply to these records. In recent years, as requests for disclosure of members' individual records under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act have become more common, clerks of governing bodies and local government managers and attorneys have begun assisting their governing bodies in establishing better systems to maintain these records and comply with the Act.

## What are the primary responsibilities of local governments under the Act?

**Tell governing body members to read the Act**. Every person elected, re-elected, appointed, or reappointed to the governing body of any locality or other local public body subject to the Act must be provided a copy of the Act within two weeks of election, re-election, appointment or reappointment. The Act assigns responsibility for doing this to the public body's chief administrator, agency head or legal counsel, but in practice the duty may be delegated to someone else, such as the clerk of the public body. The Act also requires members of the public body to read and become familiar with the Act after they receive it. Following this explanation is a copy of the Act with amendments through July 1, 2023, to be used for this purpose.

**Designate a local public records officer.** Every locality is required to designate at least one records officer to serve as a liaison to the Library of Virginia, and to implement and oversee a records management program, and coordinate the disposition, including destruction, of obsolete records. Local records officers can be designated either by the governing body of the locality or agency or by its chief administrative officer. The locality must give the Library contact information for its designated public records officers and update

that information as it changes. Larger localities and organizations may decide to designate more than one records officer, with some having responsibility for the records of only a single department, but all public records in the locality must have someone designated to be responsible for them. The Library conducts training programs for local records officers to help them understand and comply with the requirements of the Act.

**Establish a local records management and retention program.** The Act requires every locality and local agency to "ensure that its public records are preserved, maintained, and accessible throughout their lifecycle." The Library has published a very good technical manual for the establishment of a records management program, which along with much other useful information, is available on the public records section of the Library's website: www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records.

## What are some duties of a records retention officer?

The primary duties are to be certain that the departments or agencies for which the officer is responsible keep their records for the required length of time, maintain them in an accessible manner, and destroy them when it is time to do so.

## What does "accessible throughout their lifecycle" mean?

How many of us have a box or drawer in our office full of five floppy disks or 3.5-inch diskettes, but no longer have a drive on our desktop computer with which to read them? One of the jobs of the records retention officer is to make sure that records aren't made inaccessible in that way. Records must be maintained in a form that can be viewed or read for as long as those records are required to be kept. For paper records that is generally not a problem, except for very old records that must be kept permanently. These may require photographing, copying, or scanning to preserve their contents. For records stored in other media, the Act requires that they be converted or migrated to new media as technologies become obsolete, "as often as necessary so that information is not lost due to hardware, software, or media obsolescence or deterioration."

## How long do records have to be kept?

The length of time varies depending on the type of record. As authorized by the Act, the Library of Virginia has established retention schedules for various categories of state and local government records. Some types of records must be maintained permanently. For

certain types of permanent records that are considered essential, copies must also be made and sent to the Library for storage, so they can be recovered in case the originals are destroyed by fire, flood or another catastrophe. Other types of records must be kept only a few years and then destroyed. All the schedules are also available online: www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/sched_local/index.htm.

## Are we really obligated to destroy some older records? Why?

Yes, the Act requires destruction of public records "in a timely manner" once their designated retention period has expired. The Library's website has more guidance – www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/timely.asp.

In part, this requirement is intended to make room for new records by getting rid of ones no longer needed. The Act also says that it is state policy for records management to be uniform throughout the Commonwealth. Requiring destruction on a regular schedule ensures that records of the same age and type will be available in all localities at any given time. This is helpful to someone researching information of the same type in more than one locality. Following the schedules for destruction of records will also be helpful in limiting the scope of future requests for disclosure of records under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

## What conditions must be met before destroying records?

First, the designated retention schedule for the records must have expired. Second, the records must not be the subject of any current Freedom of Information Act disclosure request, litigation or audit, or any proposed change in the retention schedules. Third, the locality or agency's designated public records officer must have certified on a form approved by the Library that the records are appropriate for destruction. After the records are destroyed that form must be sent to the Library of Virginia. The forms required for the record destruction process are found on the website of the Library.

## Can we give the records away or sell them instead of destroying them?

The Act requires that any records created before 1912 be offered to the Library of Virginia before being destroyed. Selling public records or giving them to anyone else is specifically prohibited by the Act.

In the 2020 Virginia General Assembly session a section to the Act was added that states that any public records created prior to January 1, 1901, held by an individual or private entity lawfully in any manner may be displayed without paying a fee or requesting permission from the original custodian of such record.

## What are the consequences if we don't comply with the retention and destruction requirements for our records? Are there fines or penalties?

Unlike the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Public Records does not authorize private citizens to sue public agencies or officials to force them to comply with the Act. The Librarian of Virginia is given limited authority to sue someone who is illegally retaining public records that he is not entitled to keep, such as an officeholder whose term has expired. The Act also gives the Library the power to audit state or local agencies for compliance with the Act and to report noncompliance to the local governing body and the General Assembly. Such audits are not frequent, and the Library has no power to impose monetary or other penalties for non-compliance even when revealed by audit.

## Why do we need to comply, then?

The best reason for compliance is that good records management can make your organization more efficient and benefit both current and future local officials by making it easier to know what has occurred in the past. Legally, the lack of a specific penalty does not change your statutory obligation to comply with the Act. and deliberately ignoring it could be cited as poor job performance, or even as malfeasance in an extreme case.

The Freedom of Information Act may provide another reason to comply with the Public Records Act in some cases. When a citizen requests access to a record under FOIA, the local agency or official has an obligation to produce that record, unless it is covered by a specific statutory exemption.

If the record has been discarded or destroyed before the end of the retention period established by the State Library, the failure to comply with the Public Records Act may be revealed, which is embarrassing at the very least. We are not aware that any court has ruled that failure to produce the record due to its premature destruction also constitutes a violation of FOIA, but we believe such an argument could be made. FOIA violations, of course, can result in civil penalties and payment of the requester's attorney fees.

# Title 42.1. Libraries. Chapter 7. Virginia Public Records Act.

As required under Virginia Code § 42.1-76.1 and § 2.2-3702, "Any person elected, reelected, appointed, or re- appointed to the governing body of any agency subject to this chapter shall… read and become familiar with the provisions of this chapter."

The text of the Public Records Act follows to assist local officials in complying with this section of the Act.

## § 42.1-76. Legislative intent; title of chapter.

The General Assembly intends by this chapter to establish a single body of law applicable to all public officers and employees on the subject of public records management and preservation and to ensure that the procedures used to manage and preserve public records will be uniform throughout the Commonwealth.

This chapter may be cited as the Virginia Public Records Act.

## § 42.1-76.1. Notice of Chapter.

Any person elected, reelected, appointed, or reappointed to the governing body of any agency subject to this chapter shall (i) be furnished by the agency or public body's administrator or legal counsel with a copy of this chapter within two weeks following election, reelection, appointment, or reappointment and (ii) read and become familiar with the provisions of this chapter.

## § 42.1-77. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Agency" means all boards, commissions, departments, divisions, institutions, and authorities, and parts thereof, of the Commonwealth or its political subdivisions and includes the offices of constitutional officers.

"Archival record" means a public record of continuing and enduring value useful to the citizens of the Commonwealth and necessary to the administrative functions of public agencies in the conduct of services and activities mandated by law that is identified on a Library of Virginia approved records retention and disposition schedule as having sufficient informational value to be permanently maintained by the Commonwealth.

"Archives" means the program administered by The Library of Virginia for the preservation of archival records.

"Board" means the State Library Board.

"Conversion" means the act of moving electronic records to a different format, especially data from an obsolete format to a current format.

"Custodian" means the public official in charge of an office having public records.

"Disaster plan" means the information maintained by an agency that outlines recovery techniques and methods to be followed in case of an emergency that impacts the agency's records.

"Electronic record" means a public record whose creation, storage, and access require the use of an automated system or device. Ownership of the hardware, software, or media used to create, store, or access the electronic record has no bearing on a determination of whether such record is a public record.

"Essential public record" means records that are required for recovery and reconstruction of any agency to enable it to resume its core operations and functions and to protect the rights and interests of persons.

"Librarian of Virginia" means the State Librarian of Virginia or his designated representative.

"Lifecycle" means the creation, use, maintenance, and disposition of a public record.

"Migration" means the act of moving electronic records from one information system or medium to another to ensure continued access to the records while maintaining the records' authenticity, integrity, reliability, and usability.

"Original record" means the first generation of the information and is the preferred version of a record. Archival records should to the maximum extent possible be original records.

"Preservation" means the processes and operations involved in ensuring the technical and intellectual survival of authentic records through time.

"Public official" means all persons holding any office created by the Constitution of Virginia or by any act of the General Assembly, the Governor and all other officers of the executive branch of the state government, and all other officers, heads, presidents or chairmen of boards, commissions, departments, and agencies of the state government or its political subdivisions.

"Public record" or "record" means recorded information that documents a transaction or activity by

or with any public officer, agency, or employee of an agency. Regardless of physical form or characteristic, the recorded information is a "public record" if it is produced, collected, received, or retained in pursuance of law or in connection with the transaction of public business. The medium upon which such information is recorded has no bearing on the determination of whether the recording is a "public record."

For purposes of this chapter, "public record" does not include (i) nonrecord materials, meaning materials made or acquired and preserved solely for reference use or exhibition purposes, extra copies of documents preserved only for convenience or reference, or stocks of publications or (ii) records that are not related to or affect the carrying out of the constitutional, statutory, or other official ceremonial duties of a public official, including the correspondence, diaries, journals, or notes that are not prepared for, utilized for, circulated, or communicated in the course of the transaction of public business.

"Records retention and disposition schedule" means a Library of Virginia-approved timetable stating the required retention period and disposition action of a records series. The administrative, fiscal, historical, and legal value of a public record shall be considered in appraising its appropriate retention schedule. The terms "administrative," "fiscal," "historical," and "legal" value shall be defined as:

1. "Administrative value": Records shall be deemed of administrative value if they have continuing utility in the operation of an agency.
2. "Fiscal value": Records shall be deemed of fiscal value if they are needed to document and verify financial authorizations, obligations, and transactions.
3. "Historical value": Records shall be deemed of historical value if they contain unique information, regardless of age, that provides understanding of some aspect of the government and promotes the development of an informed and enlightened citizenry.
4. "Legal value": Records shall be deemed of legal value if they document actions taken in the protection and proving of legal or civil rights and obligations of individuals and agencies.

## § 42.1-78. Confidentiality safeguarded.

Any records made confidential by law shall be so treated. Records that by law are required to be closed to the public shall not be deemed to be made open to the public under the provisions of this chapter. Records in the custody of The Library of Virginia that are required to be closed to the public shall be open for public access 75 years after the date of creation of the record. No provision of this chapter shall be construed to authorize or require the opening of any records ordered to be sealed by a court; however, upon a petition filed with the clerk, a judge may enter an order releasing any record sealed prior to January 1, 1901. All records deposited in the archives that are not made confidential by law shall be open to public access.

## § 42.1-79. Records management function vested in The Library of Virginia.

A. The archival and records management function shall be vested in The Library of Virginia. The Library of Virginia shall be the official custodian and trustee for the Commonwealth of all public records of whatever kind, and regardless of physical form or characteristics, that are transferred to it from any agency. As the Commonwealth's official repository of public records, The Library of Virginia shall assume ownership and administrative control of such records on behalf of the Commonwealth. The Library of Virginia shall own and operate any equipment necessary to manage and retain control of electronic archival records in its custody, but may, at its discretion, contract with third-party entities to provide any or all services related to managing archival records on equipment owned by the contractor, by other third parties, or by The Library of Virginia.

B. The Librarian of Virginia shall name a State Archivist who shall perform such functions as the Librarian of Virginia assigns.

C. Whenever legislation affecting public records management and preservation is under consideration, The Library of Virginia shall review the proposal and advise the General Assembly on the effects of its proposed implementation.

## § 42.1-82. Duties and powers of Library Board.

A. The State Library Board shall:

1. Issue regulations concerning procedures for the disposal, physical destruction or other disposition of public records containing social security numbers. The procedures shall include all reasonable steps to destroy such documents by (i) shredding, (ii) erasing, or (iii) otherwise modifying the social security numbers in those records to make them unreadable or undecipherable by any means.
2. Issue regulations and guidelines designed to facilitate the creation, preservation, storage, filing,

reformatting, management, and destruction of public records by agencies. Such regulations shall mandate procedures for records management and include recommendations for the creation, retention, disposal, or other disposition of public records.

B. The State Library Board may establish advisory committees composed of persons with expertise in the matters under consideration to assist the Library Board in developing regulations and guidelines.

### § 42.1-85. Records Management Program; agencies to cooperate; agencies to designate records officer.

A. The Library of Virginia shall administer a records management program for the application of efficient and economical methods for managing the lifecycle of public records consistent with regulations and guidelines promulgated by the State Library Board, including operation of a records center or centers. The Library of Virginia shall establish procedures and techniques for the effective management of public records, make continuing surveys of records and records keeping practices, and recommend improvements in current records management practices, including the use of space, equipment, software, and supplies employed in creating, maintaining, and servicing records.

B. Any agency with public records shall cooperate with The Library of Virginia in conducting surveys. Each agency shall establish and maintain an active, continuing program for the economical and efficient management of the records of such agency. The agency shall be responsible for ensuring that its public records are preserved, maintained, and accessible throughout their lifecycle, including converting and migrating electronic records as often as necessary so that information is not lost due to hardware, software, or media obsolescence or deterioration. Any public official who converts or migrates an electronic record shall ensure that it is an accurate copy of the original record. The converted or migrated record shall have the force of the original.

C. Each state agency and political subdivision of this Commonwealth shall designate as many as appropriate, but at least one, records officer to serve as a liaison to The Library of Virginia for the purposes of implementing and overseeing a records management program, and coordinating legal disposition, including destruction, of obsolete records. Designation of state agency records officers shall be by the respective agency head. Designation of a records officer for political subdivisions shall be by the governing body or chief administrative official of the political subdivision. Each entity responsible for designating a records officer shall provide The Library of Virginia with the name and contact information of the designated records officer, and shall ensure that such information is updated in a timely manner in the event of any changes.

D. The Library of Virginia shall develop and make available training and education opportunities concerning the requirements of and compliance with this chapter for records officers in the Commonwealth.

### § 42.1-86. Essential public records; security recovery copies; disaster plans.

A. In cooperation with the head of each agency, The Library of Virginia shall establish and maintain a program for the selection and preservation of essential public records. The program shall provide for preserving, classifying, arranging, and indexing essential public records so that such records are made available to the public. The program shall provide for making recovery copies or designate as recovery copies existing copies of such essential public records.

B. Recovery copies shall meet quality standards established by The Library of Virginia and shall be made by a process that accurately reproduces the record and forms a durable medium. A recovery copy may also be made by creating a paper or electronic copy of an original electronic record. Recovery copies shall have the same force and effect for all purposes as the original record and shall be as admissible in evidence as the original record whether the original record is in existence or not. Recovery copies shall be preserved in the place and manner prescribed by the State Library Board and the Governor.

C. The Library of Virginia shall develop a plan to ensure preservation of public records in the event of disaster or emergency as defined in § 44-146.16. This plan shall be coordinated with the Department of Emergency Management and copies shall be distributed to all agency heads. The plan shall be reviewed and updated at least once every five years. The personnel of the Library shall be responsible for coordinating emergency recovery operations when public records are affected. Each agency shall ensure that a plan for the protection and recovery of public records is included in its comprehensive disaster plan.

### § 42.1-86.01. Records may be retained in electronic medium.

Notwithstanding any provision of law requiring a public record to be retained in a tangible medium, an agency may retain any public record in an electronic

a request is made in writing by the successor or Librarian of Virginia to deliver the public records as herein required shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor.

### § 42.1-89. Petition and court order for return of public records not in authorized possession.

The Librarian of Virginia or his designated representative such as the State Archivist or any public official who is the custodian of public records in the possession of a person or agency not authorized by the custodian or by law to possess such public records shall petition the circuit court in the city or county in which the person holding such records resides or in which the materials in issue, or any part thereof, are located for the return of such records. The court shall order such public records be delivered to the petitioner upon finding that the materials in issue are public records and that such public records are in the possession of a person not authorized by the custodian of the public records or by law to possess such public records. If the order of delivery does not receive compliance, the plaintiff shall request that the court enforce such order through its contempt power and procedures.

### § 42.1-90. Seizure of public records not in authorized possession.

A. At any time after the filing of the petition set out in § 42.1-89 or contemporaneous with such filing, the person seeking the return of the public records may by ex parte petition request the judge or the court in which the action was filed to issue an order directed at the sheriff or other proper officer, as the case may be, commanding him to seize the materials which are the subject of the action and deliver the same to the court under the circumstances hereinafter set forth.

B. The judge aforesaid shall issue an order of seizure upon receipt of an affidavit from the petitioner which alleges that the material at issue may be sold, secreted, removed out of this Commonwealth or otherwise disposed of so as not to be forthcoming to answer the final judgment of the court respecting the same; or that such property may be destroyed or materially damaged or injured if permitted to remain out of the petitioner's possession.

C. The aforementioned order of seizure shall issue without notice to the respondent and without the posting of any bond or other security by the petitioner.

### § 42.1-90.1. Auditing.

The Librarian may, in his discretion, conduct an audit of the records management practices of any agency. Any agency subject to the audit shall cooperate and provide the Library with any records or assistance that it requests. The Librarian shall compile a written summary of the findings of the audit and any actions necessary to bring the agency into compliance with this chapter. The summary shall be a public record, and shall be made available to the agency subject to the audit, the Governor, and the chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on General Laws, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations of the General Assembly.

### § 42.1-91.1. Availability of public records created prior to January 1, 1901.

Notwithstanding any provisions of a previously executed contract with any department, agency, or institution of the Commonwealth or political subdivision, any individual or private entity lawfully in possession of public records created prior to January 1, 1901, or images of such records may display or publish such records in any format, including in an electronic database or on the Internet, without paying a fee to or requesting permission from the original custodian of such records.

**A RESOLUTION**
**REGARDING MEETING ATTENDANCE BY**
**CITY COUNCIL APPOINTEES TO CITY BOARDS, COMMITTEES,**
**TASK FORCES AND COMMISSIONS**

**WHEREAS**, the City Council makes a number of appointments to boards and commissions required by law, and to other boards, committees, task forces and commissions established by the Council for the purpose of performing certain delegated functions or advising the City Council on matters of concern to the City; and,

**WHEREAS,** when City Council makes appointments it is with the expectation that the appointee is willing and able to attend meetings and to devote the necessary time to be a full and meaningful participant on the board; and,

**WHEREAS**, Virginia law provides that members of a Planning Commission or Economic Development Authority may be removed from office by the local governing body if the commissioner or board member is absent from any three consecutive meetings, or any four meetings within any twelve month period; and,

**WHEREAS**, the members of City advisory boards, committees, task forces and commissions are appointed to serve at the pleasure of the City Council, yet there is no established City policy requiring regular attendance at meetings of the respective boards; and,

**WHEREAS**, it will be in the best interests of the respective boards, committees, task forces and commissions and their members, as well as the public, to have established rules regarding attendance at meetings of the board.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Charlottesville, Virginia that:

(1) Effective upon the passage of this Resolution, it shall be the policy of the City Council that a City Council-appointed member of any City board, committee, task force or commission shall be subject to removal from office if he or she is absent from any three consecutive meetings, or any four meetings within any twelve month period.

(2) In the event that any board, committee, task force or commission member fails to meet the meeting attendance requirements as stated in this policy, the chair or presiding officer of the board, committee, task force or commission in question shall notify the Mayor of the absences.

(3) Upon the receipt of information indicating a failure to meet the meeting attendance expectations set forth in this policy, City Council will provide notice to the board member in question and provide an opportunity to respond to the concerns regarding meeting attendance. The City Council may thereafter, in its discretion, remove the member from office. Any City Council consideration or discussion regarding the removal of a City Council appointee from office may take place during a duly convened closed session of City Council.

(4) This Resolution shall only apply to City Council appointees to boards, committees, task forces and commissions. It shall not apply to the removal of any person from office when removal is provided for and governed by state law.

(5) The Clerk of City Council is directed to provide a copy of this Resolution to all affected City boards, committees, task forces and commissions.

Approved by Council
November 3, 2014

Yaige Rice

Clerk of Council

Code of Virginia
Title 2.2. Administration of Government
Chapter 37. Virginia Freedom of Information Act

## § 2.2-3708.3. (Effective September 1, 2022) Meetings held through electronic communication means; situations other than declared states of emergency.

A. Public bodies are encouraged to (i) provide public access, both in person and through electronic communication means, to public meetings and (ii) provide avenues for public comment at public meetings when public comment is customarily received, which may include public comments made in person or by electronic communication means or other methods.

B. Individual members of a public body may use remote participation instead of attending a public meeting in person if, in advance of the public meeting, the public body has adopted a policy as described in subsection D and the member notifies the public body chair that:

1. The member has a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance;

2. A medical condition of a member of the member's family requires the member to provide care that prevents the member's physical attendance;

3. The member's principal residence is more than 60 miles from the meeting location identified in the required notice for such meeting; or

4. The member is unable to attend the meeting due to a personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the personal matter. However, the member may not use remote participation due to personal matters more than two meetings per calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater.

If participation by a member through electronic communication means is approved pursuant to this subsection, the public body holding the meeting shall record in its minutes the remote location from which the member participated; however, the remote location need not be open to the public and may be identified in the minutes by a general description. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 1 or 2, the public body shall also include in its minutes the fact that the member participated through electronic communication means due to a (i) temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevented the member's physical attendance or (ii) family member's medical condition that required the member to provide care for such family member, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 3, the public body shall also include in its minutes the fact that the member participated through electronic communication means due to the distance between the member's principal residence and the meeting location. If participation is approved pursuant to subdivision 4, the public body shall also include in its minutes the specific nature of the personal matter cited by the member.

If a member's participation from a remote location pursuant to this subsection is disapproved because such participation would violate the policy adopted pursuant to subsection D, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

C. With the exception of local governing bodies, local school boards, planning commissions, architectural review boards, zoning appeals boards, and boards with the authority to deny, revoke, or suspend a professional or occupational license, any public body may hold all-virtual public meetings, provided that the public body follows the other requirements in this chapter for meetings, the public body has adopted a policy as described in subsection D, and:

1. An indication of whether the meeting will be an in-person or all-virtual public meeting is included in the required meeting notice along with a statement notifying the public that the method by which a public body chooses to meet shall not be changed unless the public body provides a new meeting notice in accordance with the provisions of § 2.2-3707;

2. Public access to the all-virtual public meeting is provided via electronic communication means;

3. The electronic communication means used allows the public to hear all members of the public body participating in the all-virtual public meeting and, when audio-visual technology is available, to see the members of the public body as well;

4. A phone number or other live contact information is provided to alert the public body if the audio or video transmission of the meeting provided by the public body fails, the public body monitors such designated means of communication during the meeting, and the public body takes a recess until public access is restored if the transmission fails for the public;

5. A copy of the proposed agenda and all agenda packets and, unless exempt, all materials furnished to members of a public body for a meeting is made available to the public in electronic format at the same time that such materials are provided to members of the public body;

6. The public is afforded the opportunity to comment through electronic means, including by way of written comments, at those public meetings when public comment is customarily received;

7. No more than two members of the public body are together in any one remote location unless that remote location is open to the public to physically access it;

8. If a closed session is held during an all-virtual public meeting, transmission of the meeting to the public resumes before the public body votes to certify the closed meeting as required by subsection D of § 2.2-3712;

9. The public body does not convene an all-virtual public meeting (i) more than two times per calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater, or (ii) consecutively with another all-virtual public meeting; and

10. Minutes of all-virtual public meetings held by electronic communication means are taken as required by § 2.2-3707 and include the fact that the meeting was held by electronic communication means and the type of electronic communication means by which the meeting was held. If a member's participation from a remote location pursuant to this subsection is disapproved because such participation would violate the policy adopted pursuant to subsection D, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

D. Before a public body uses all-virtual public meetings as described in subsection C or allows members to use remote participation as described in subsection B, the public body shall first adopt a policy, by recorded vote at a public meeting, that shall be applied strictly and uniformly, without exception, to the entire membership and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or the matters that will be considered or voted on at the meeting. The policy shall:

1. Describe the circumstances under which an all-virtual public meeting and remote participation will be allowed and the process the public body will use for making requests to use remote participation, approving or denying such requests, and creating a record of such requests; and

2. Fix the number of times remote participation for personal matters or all-virtual public meetings can be used per calendar year, not to exceed the limitations set forth in subdivisions B 4 and C 9.

Any public body that creates a committee, subcommittee, or other entity however designated of the public body to perform delegated functions of the public body or to advise the public body may also adopt a policy on behalf of its committee, subcommittee, or other entity that shall apply to the committee, subcommittee, or other entity's use of individual remote participation and all-virtual public meetings.

2022, c. 597.

Sec. 2-8. - Limitation on terms of members of boards and commissions.

(a) Unless otherwise provided, no person shall be appointed by the city council to any board or commission for more than two (2) complete terms. For boards and commissions with two-year terms, no person shall be appointed by the city council for more than four (4) complete terms, unless otherwise provided.

(b) Appointments by the city council to any board or commission to fill vacancies shall be for the unexpired portion of the term only.

(c) Persons initially appointed for less than a full term may thereafter serve two (2) complete terms or four (4) complete two-year terms, as may be applicable.

(Code 1976, § 2-3; 7-21-03)

# Parliamentary Procedure Guide

By: Walter C. Erwin, Former Lynchburg City Attorney

(Revised for use by Charlottesville Boards & Commissions_2024Dec03.mr)

**PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE FOR LOCAL PUBLIC BODIES---THE METHOD IN THE MADNESS**

When you mention parliamentary procedure to public officials the response you often get is: *Parliamentary procedure. Sounds complicated? Controlling? Boring? Intimidating? Why do we need to follow all those rules for conducting a meeting? Why can't we just run our meetings however we want to without those complicated rules? Who cares if we follow parliamentary procedure?* Local government attorneys can easily provide the answers to those questions.

Almost every local government attorney has had the experience of attending a public meeting that ran on and on and did not accomplish anything. The meeting jumped from one topic to another without deciding anything. Some members disrupted the meeting with their own personal agendas, arguments erupted, a few members tried to make all the decisions and ignore everyone else's opinions, and everyone leaves the meeting with a sense of frustration. If this sounds familiar, then a little parliamentary procedure may be just the thing to turn an unproductive, frustrating meeting into a thing of beauty—just kidding, but the use of parliamentary procedure can make meetings more orderly and productive.

Most public bodies employ rules of procedure for the conduct of their meetings. The majority of public bodies use *Robert's Rules of Order* (hereafter *Robert's*), but often supplement *Robert's* with "local" or "special" rules of procedure. Because of its common usage, this outline is based on *Robert's*, and the references in the outline are to *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised,* 12th Edition.

In reality, *Robert's* is designed to promote the efficient and orderly operation of business. One of *Robert's* goals is to balance individual and majority rights. Properly used, *Robert's* provides all members of a public body an opportunity to be heard, but also ensures that a minority cannot prevent a majority from transacting business. While *Robert's* is technical in nature, it is also logical and can help ensure the effective operation of meetings. Unfortunately, some members of public bodies only turn to *Robert's* when faced with the prospect that a vote is going to or has gone against them in an effort to prevent a vote on an issue or to try to revive an issue that has already been decided. They do not use *Robert's* to promote effective parliamentary procedure, but rather to try and deal with a particular issue.

Parliamentary procedure is the rule of the game for democracy.

The goal of this handout is to emphasize the simple machinery in *Robert's*, with a focus on the procedures most commonly used in meetings.

## THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDING OFFICER

There are a number of rules of parliamentary procedure that can be used to maintain order and decorum in a public meeting. But in order for this approach to be successful, the presiding officer must be willing to invoke these procedures and the other members of the public body must be willing to support the presiding officer's efforts to run the meetings in compliance with the rules of procedure.

Under *Robert's* the presiding officer has control over the meeting. No one can speak without being recognized by the chairperson. This power comes with a great deal of responsibility. A good presiding officer can help facilitate a meeting by:

Reading and becoming familiar with the public body's rules of procedure and using them as a reference as often as needed.

Being familiar with the agenda and conducting the meeting according to the agenda and trying to keep the other members focused on the orders of the day, understanding that a majority of the body has the right to change the agenda if they wish to do so.

Conducting the meeting impartially and protecting the rights of the other members by making sure that all members who wish to speak on a topic get a chance to do so.

Trying to prevent some members from monopolizing the meeting and not allowing a vocal few to dominate the debates.

Mediating conflict by being open and up-front about all the options available, hearing all sides, facilitating a consensus process and seeking outside assistance when needed.

Maintaining impartiality and a professional image. Once the public body makes a decision, the presiding officer must back that decision and work to see it through, despite their own feelings about the issue.

## THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT ATTORNEY

(For City Council and other specified boards.)

The local government attorney is frequently designated to serve as the parliamentarian for the public bodies. It is important to remember that in serving as parliamentarian it is not the local government attorney's role to try and direct the course of the meeting or to rule on points of order. Those are the roles of the presiding officer, only the presiding officer may rule on matters of procedure. *Robert's*, Chapter XV, §47 Officials; Minutes and Officials' Reports.

In serving as the parliamentarian, it is the local government attorney's role to advise the presiding officer when points of order are raised. The parliamentarian's role in a meeting is purely an advisory and a consultative one. However, a good parliamentarian does not have to wait to be asked for an opinion. As the parliamentarian the local government attorney should try to stay one step ahead of the meeting and alert the presiding office of an impending problem. But

the local government attorney's role as the parliamentarian is to try and stay in the background as much as possible and to make the presiding officer's job as easy as possible.

## PRINCIPLES OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

I am not advocating a blind adherence to all of the provisions of Robert's, which was not written with public bodies in mind. A number of the motions and rules in *Robert's* are not applicable to public bodies or are unnecessary (e.g., voting by mail, expelling a member from office, etc.). Following *Robert's* should be seen as a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Parliamentary procedure is not intended to inhibit a meeting with unnecessary rules or to prevent people from expressing their opinions; it is intended to help facilitate the smooth functioning of the meeting.

Taking a practical approach to parliamentary procedure means there are several basic steps that should be followed during a meeting.

Step I Declare a quorum
Step II Get a main motion on the floor so the issue can be debated
Step III Control the debate of the motion
Step IV Amend the motion
Step V Close debate on the motion
Step VI Vote on the motion
Step VII On occasion, reconsider the vote

# QUORUM

Before a public body can transact business, it must have a quorum. A quorum is the minimum number of members of the public body who legally must be present to conduct business. A quorum is a majority of the entire membership of the public body. *Robert's*, Chapter XI, §40 Quorum. A quorum always refers to the number of members present at a meeting, not the number of members voting on a particular issue. *Robert's*, Chapter XI, §40 Quorum. *See also*, 1983-84 Opinion of the Attorney General at 271 and 1971-72 Opinion of the Attorney General at 292.

A question sometimes arises as to whether or not vacant seats are included in determining the number of members necessary to constitute a quorum. *Robert's* does not address this question, but in an opinion dated September 7, 2010 to the Honorable Terry G. Kilgore, Member, House of Delegates, 2010 Va AG LEXIS 91, the Attorney General advised that a vacant seat on a school board is not counted when determining whether or not a quorum was present. "A vacancy reduces the number of persons who are duly appointed or elected and, therefore, reduces the number of persons necessary to establish a quorum."

Note for local government attorneys: Section 15.2-1415 of the Virginia Code provides that a majority of the members of a governing body constitutes a quorum.

Note for local government attorneys: In *Jakabcin v. Town of Front Royal*, 271 Va. 660, 628 S.E. 2d 319 (2006) the Virginia Supreme Court held that even if some members of a governing body were disqualified from participating in a meeting by the Virginia Conflict of Interest Act (COIA) they still had to attend the meeting in order for there to be a quorum. Following the Supreme Court's decision, the General Assembly amended Section 2.2-3112 and Section 15.2-1415 of the Virginia Code to provide that if members of a governing body are disqualified from participating in a quorum under the COIA, the remaining members of the public body constitute a quorum for the conduct of public business. However, the amendments to Section 2.2-3112 and Section 15.2-1415 do not cover situations where members disqualify themselves or stay away from meetings for reasons other than the COIA.

A quorum must be present in order for a public body to transact any business and a quorum must remain present throughout the meeting. If a quorum is lost, the presiding officer must stop the proceeding because the quorum has been lost. If no quorum is present or if a quorum is lost, the public body can only (i) fix a time to adjourn, (ii) adjourn, (iii) recess, or (iv) take steps to obtain a quorum. *Robert's*, Chapter XI, §40:6 Proceedings in The Absence of a Quorum.

Sections 2.2-3708.2 of the Virginia Code allows the members of public bodies to participate in meetings by electronic means in certain circumstances, for example, if the Governor or the local governing body has declared a state of emergency without a quorum of the public body being physically present if the nature of the emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe for the members of the public body to assemble.

Section 2.2-3708.3 of the Virginia Code allows a local public body to hold a meeting by electronic means in situations other than declared states of emergency and allows individual members of a public body to participate in a meeting by electronic means under certain conditions (e.g. if the member has a disability or medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance). However, the public body must adopt a policy allowing such participation.

If a public body should consult with its local government attorney in order to make sure it is complying with the requirements of the Virginia Code before holding an electronic meeting.

Because the use of electronic meetings is becoming more common, the 12th Edition of *Robert's* includes procedures for electronic meetings and Sample Rules for Electronic Meetings.

## MAIN MOTION

Once a public body has a quorum it can conduct business legally. The making of a main motion is the starting point for parliamentary procedure. Under *Robert's*, the presiding officer should not allow the members of the public body to discuss an item of business until a main motion has been made. *Robert's*, Chapter II, §4 The Handling of a Motion. However, many public bodies do not follow this rule and allow discussions to take place even if no one has made a motion and the motion is made at the conclusion of the discussions. The maker of a motion is not required to vote for the motion. The maker may be making the motion simply to bring an issue to a vote so it can be voted up or down. While the maker of a motion can vote against his motion, the maker of the motion may not speak against the motion. *Robert's*, Chapter XII, §43:25 Refraining From Speaking Against One's Own Motion.

A motion must reasonably identify the substance of the motion. In 2014 the Attorney General advised the Powhatan School Board that the School Board's motion "to approve SRP consideration" that was intended to permit the former superintendent to participate in the county's supplemental retirement program was defective; in order for a vote to be valid, the subject of the vote must be clearly disclosed. The motion in question did not disclose what the SRP was an abbreviation for, or identify the name or position of the person who was being admitted to the supplemental retirement program. Therefore, the vote "was legally defective, null and void." *See*, 2014 Va. AG LEXIS 27 (July 22, 2014*).*

## SECONDING A MOTION

Once a member of a public body has made a main motion, the motion needs to be seconded. One of the goals of parliamentary procedure is to balance individual and majority rights. Requiring a second to a motion prevents a public body from having to consider a motion that only one member wishes to discuss. A second to a motion only indicates the seconder agrees the motion is worthy of discussion, not that the seconder favors the motion. Prior to debating a motion, a member of the public body may raise a point of order that the motion has not been seconded. If no one is willing to second the motion it dies for lack of a second and the public body moves on to the next item of business. *Robert's,* Chapter II, §4:10 The Handling of a Motion.

Members of a public body sometimes express concerns if a motion is adopted without being seconded. If a motion is discussed and adopted without a second, the absence of a second does not affect the validity of the motion. By engaging in discussion, the public body agreed the item was worthy of discussion and action. Once debate on an issue has begun, the rationale for a second has been met and a second is no longer needed. *Robert's*, Chapter II, §4:13 The Handling of a Motion.

There are several Attorney General Opinions advising a second is not needed to place a motion before a local public body and the lack of a second does not affect the validity of the vote. *See*, 1981-82 Opinion of the Attorney General at 41 and 1972-73 Opinion of the Attorney General at 38. Also, in *Shannon Fredericksburg Motor Inn, Inc. v. Spotsylvania County Bd. of Supervisors,* 9 Va. Cir 418 (1977). The court held that the failure of the board of supervisors to second a motion downzoning property did not invalidate the ordinance. The court noted that after debate or the taking of the vote has begun, the lack of a second is immaterial and does not affect the validity of a vote.

## DEBATING THE MOTION

(a) Length and number of speeches. Under *Robert's* each member of a body has the right to speak twice on the same question during a meeting but cannot make a second speech on the same issue so long as any member who has not spoken on that question desires the floor. A member who has spoken twice on a particular question during a meeting has exhausted his right to debate the question for that day. *Robert's*, Chapter XII, §43 Length and Number of Speeches.

(b) The maker speaks first. The maker of a motion has the right to speak first if he or she so wishes. *Robert's*, Chapter II, §4:12 The Stating Of the Question By The Chair and Chapter XII, §43:4 Rules Public Debate.

(c) Remarks must be germane. During debate a member's remarks must be germane to the issue before the body; a member's statements must have a bearing on whether the pending motion should be adopted or rejected. *Robert's*, Chapter XII, §43:20 Decorum in Debate.

(d) Refraining from personal attacks. A member can condemn the nature or likely consequences of a proposed measure in strong terms, but must avoid "personalities," and under no circumstances can he attack or question the motives of another member. The measure, not the man, is the subject of debate. *Robert's*, Chapter XII, §43:21 Decorum in Debate.

# THE MOTION TO AMEND AND THE MOTION TO SUBSTITUTE

Once a motion has been made and seconded, some members of the public body may want to change the motion. Changes to a motion can be made by a "motion to amend" or a "motion to substitute." Procedurally, the motion to amend and the motion to substitute are practically the same; both seek to change a pending motion. The difference in the motions is the scope of the proposed change. If someone seeks to make a single change to a motion, the proper procedure is to amend the motion. *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §12 Amend. If someone wants to make more than one change to a motion or once an amendment becomes as long as a paragraph (i.e., striking out an entire paragraph and inserting a different paragraph in its place, etc.) the proper procedure is a motion to substitute. *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §12 Amend.

Procedurally, the motion to amend and the motion to substitute:

• Cannot be made until a motion has been seconded.

• Cannot go beyond the third degree, for example:

Main Motion: "I move we have a party."
Second Degree Amendment: I move to amend the motion by adding "and invite two guests."

Third Degree Amendment: I move to amend the amendment by striking "two" and inserting "and invite four guests."

No additional amendments of the motion are permitted. *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §12:11, 12:12, and 12:13 Degrees Of Amendment.

Technically, under *Robert's* a public body should first vote on whether or not the motion to amend or substitute replaces the main motion. If a majority of the public body votes to replace the main motion with the motion to amend or substitute, it then becomes the main motion and the public body then votes the motion up or down.

An amendment must be germane to the main motion. *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §12:6 Determining the Germaneness Of An Amendment.

*Robert's* does not allow one member of an assembly to modify another member's motion by a "friendly amendment." Once a motion has been made and seconded, it is no longer the property of the mover, but belongs to the public body and cannot be amended or withdrawn without the consent of the public body. Under *Robert's*, a "friendly amendment" is a suggestion by a member of the public body that the maker of a motion request permission from the presiding officer to modify the motion. If the maker of the motion or any other member of the public body objects to the friendly amendment the proposed change must be done through a formal amendment and must be adopted by a majority vote. If no one objects to the friendly amendment, the motion is amended by unanimous consent. *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §12:91 Friendly Amendments.

Not all motions can be amended (i.e., motions to adjourn, close debate, to reconsider or rescind, lay on the table, etc., are not amendable).

## THE MOTION TO LAY ON THE TABLE AND THE MOTION TO POSTPONE

On occasion, after a motion has been made, seconded and amended, the members of a public body decide they wish to delay action on the motion. The motion to lay on the table and the motion to postpone can be used for this purpose. The motion to "lay on the table" is often confused with the "motion to postpone." The purpose of the motion to lay on the table is temporarily to set aside an item of business to deal with a more urgent item. Action on the item in question is temporarily delayed, but the item is to be taken up again during the same meeting. *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §17 Lay On The Table. Once an item of business has been laid on the table, a motion to "take from the table" is needed to bring the item back before the public body for discussion. *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §17:6 Taking A Question From The Table.

The motion to postpone delays debate on an item of business so that it may be considered at a more convenient time. An item of business may be "postponed definitely," when it is continued to a definite time or date, *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §14 Postpone To A Certain Time (Or Definitely) or "postponed indefinitely" if no future time or date is specified in the motion, *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §11 Postpone Indefinitely. The motion to postpone indefinitely can be used to deal with an item that cannot be adopted or rejected without possible undesirable consequences. Postponing the item indefinitely allows a public body to dispose of an item without having to go on record as voting either for or against the item. The public body simply votes to postpone the issue indefinitely and never brings it back for further discussion. *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §11 Postpone Indefinitely.

Why does it make a difference whether or not action on an item is delayed through a motion to lay on the table or a motion to postpone? Because the motion to lay on the table is not debatable, members of a public body may be tempted to try to use the motion to lay on the table to delay action on an embarrassing issue without engaging in a discussion of the issue. A motion to postpone is debatable and allows the members of the public body to discuss the merits of the proposed action. *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §17:2 Lay On The Table.

## CALL THE QUESTION (CLOSE DEBATE)

It is a fairly common misconception that, after debate of a motion has continued for some time, if a member of the public body shouts out "Question!" or "I call the question!" debate must immediately cease and the pending motion must be put to a vote. This is simply not the case. If a member of the public body wishes to force an end to debate, the member must first obtain the floor by being duly recognized to speak by the presiding office, and must make a motion "*To Call for the Previous Question*." Such a motion must be seconded, and then adopted by a two-thirds vote, or by unanimous consent. It is not in order to interrupt a speaker with cries of "Question" or "Call the Question," and even if no one is speaking, it is still necessary to seek recognition by the presiding officer. Also, a motion to "Call the Question" is not in order until every member of the public body has had an opportunity to speak on the motion. *Robert's*, Chapter VI, §16 Previous Question. If a member of a public body makes a motion to call the question and no one objects, debate is closed by unanimous consent and it is proper to put the motion to a vote.

# ABSTAINING FROM VOTING

Sometimes when it is time to vote on a motion a member of a public body wishes to abstain from voting. The Conflict-of-Interest Act provides that when a public official has a "personal interest" in a transaction that is being considered by his public body, the public official must declare such interest and "disqualify himself from participating in the transaction." *See*, Section 2.2-3112 of the Conflict-of-Interest Act. When the Conflict-of-Interest Act disqualifies a member of a public body from participating in a transaction, disqualification means more than simply not voting on the transaction. The member is also precluded from debating or discussing the transaction or attempting to persuade or influence the other members of the public body to take a position on the transaction.

On occasion, there are situations in which the Conflict-of-Interest Act does not prohibit a member of the public body from voting on an issue, but a member of the public body wishes to abstain from voting for other reasons. For example, a member of a public body may not have a financial interest in a matter but has some type of personal relationship with the parties involved and wishes to avoid voting in order to avoid the appearance of impropriety. However, in some instances the other members of the public body may believe a fellow member wishes to abstain from voting simply to avoid having to take a position on a controversial issue.

There is nothing in the State Code that requires a member of a local public body to vote on an issue. *Robert's* takes the position that a member of an assembly has the right to abstain from voting on an issue, stating that a member "can abstain, he cannot be compelled to vote." *Robert's*, Chapter XIII, §45:3 Right Of Abstention.

In order to deal with this issue, some public bodies have adopted special rules of procedure that require members of the public body to vote on every issue that comes before the body unless (i) they are required to abstain by the Conflict-of-Interest Act or (ii) they have the consent of their fellow members to abstain. For example, one of the Lynchburg City Council's Rules of Procedure provides that "Each member of the Council who is present at a meeting shall be required to vote upon all issues presented for decision unless prohibited from doing so by the Virginia Conflict of Interest Act or unless excused from voting by the other members of the Council. A member who wishes to be excused from voting shall state his or her reasons for abstaining and the presiding officer shall ask if any of the remaining members object. If there are any objections, the Council shall take a vote of the remaining members on the question of whether or not to allow the member to abstain from voting." However, even if a public body adopts such a rule of procedure, a public body cannot force a member to vote if the member declines to do so.

# MAJORITY VOTE

For purposes of voting, the term "majority" simply means more than half of the persons voting on a motion. The definition is "votes cast," not the number of persons present. Only those who engage in the act of voting, either for or against, determine whether a motion is adopted. Abstentions are not counted in determining if there is a majority vote. *Robert's*, Chapter XIII, §44 Bases For Determining A Voting Result.

When calculating the number of votes that must be cast, a public body can only round up not down. The requirement of a two-thirds or a three-fourths vote means at least two-thirds or three-fourths, nothing less will do. For example, if a public body has 7 members, a two-thirds vote would require 5 votes and a three-fourths vote would require 6 votes. *Robert's*, Chapter XIII, §44:3, 44:4, 44:5, and 44:6 Two-Thirds Vote. *See also*, The 1973-1974 Opinions of the Virginia Attorney General at page 432.

A member of a public body may change their vote up to the time the result of the vote has been announced, but may not change their vote after the vote has been announced without the unanimous consent of the other members of the public body. In other words, "no take backs." *Robert's*, Chapter XIII, §45:8 Changing One's Vote.

Even though as a general rule, the Virginia Code allows a majority of the members of a public body to make decisions, the Virginia Supreme Court and the Virginia Attorney General have issued opinions advising there is nothing that prohibits a local public body from placing stricter voting requirements upon itself than those imposed by State law. *Stendig Development Corporation* v. *Danville,* 214 Va. 548, 550 (1974) and the 1997 Report of the Attorney General at page 37. Accordingly, a public body can adopt rules requiring that certain decisions require more than a simple majority vote. For example, the Lynchburg City Council adopted a rule of procedure that requires a majority vote of all the members elected to City Council to make an appointment to a board or commission.

## TIE VOTE

Sometimes when a public body votes on a motion, the vote results in a tie. Members of a public body often worry over what to do about a tie vote. In *Robert's* view there is no such thing as a tie vote. A motion either gains a majority or it does not. Since a majority vote is defined as "more than half of the votes cast," a tie vote means the motion has been rejected. If a motion fails as a result of a tie vote, the public body simply takes up the next item of business. A tie vote rejects a motion because an "affirmative vote" by a majority of the members of a public body is necessary to adopt a motion. *Robert's*, Chapter XIII, §44:12 Bases For Determining A Voting Result. *See*, *Harris v. Ingram*, 240 Va. 46, 48, 392 S.E. 2d 816, 817 (1990) (a majority of the members of a public body is necessary to adopt a resolution) and 1984-85 Opinion of the Attorney General at 24 (opining that a local public body's motion to deny the issuance of a revenue bond failed for a lack of a majority on a 2-2 vote) and 1985 Va. AG LEXIS 186 (November 26, 1985) (opining that a three to three tie vote by a board of zoning appeals did not pass a motion to grant a variance).

## AN ABSENT MEMBER CAN VOTE AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING

The question sometimes arises as to whether or not members of a local public body can vote on an issue if they were not present at all or some of the hearings and debates which were conducted before the vote was taken. In *Hutton v. Town of Elkton*, 57 Va. Cir. 278, 280 (2002) the circuit court held that two members of the town council were not disqualified from voting on a bond resolution simply because they failed to attend a public hearing on the issue. Also, while not directly on point, Section 15.2-1421 of the Virginia Code further supports this position by providing that in counties that have a designated tie breaker, the tie breaker can vote on a matter even though the tie breaker was not present at the meeting when the matter was first discussed and the original vote was taken.

However, when a member of local public body misses a meeting, it is standard procedure for such member to abstain from voting on the approval of the minutes for the meeting the member did not attend.

## MOTIONS TO RECONSIDER, RESCIND AND RENEW

Even though a public body has voted on an issue, the issue may not be settled. Sometimes members of a public body wish to a correct hasty, ill-advised or erroneous action or to consider additional information or a changed situation that developed since the original vote was taken. *Robert's*, Chapter IX, §37 Reconsider. In the absence of ordinances or rules adopted by the local public body, there is no prohibition against a defeated motion being considered again by the local public body at a subsequent meeting. *See*, 1984-85 Opinion of the Attorney General at 24. The motion to reconsider, the motion to rescind and to a lesser extent, the motion to renew, allow a public body to revisit an earlier vote.

(a) Reconsider. A motion to reconsider allows the public body to bring back for further consideration a motion that has already been the subject of a vote. Only a member who voted on the prevailing side may make a motion to reconsider. Anyone may second the motion. A motion to reconsider requires a majority vote to pass. Under *Robert's,* a motion to reconsider must be made before the end of the same meeting at which the original vote was taken. *Robert's*, Chapter IX, §37 Reconsider. Some localities adopt special rules of procedure that extend the time for making a motion to reconsider. For example, the Lynchburg City Council adopted a special rule of procedure allowing a motion to reconsider to be made "at the next succeeding regular meeting" of City Council.

(b) Rescind. The motion to rescind allows a public body to nullify or negate a motion that was previously adopted. Local public bodies typically resort to a motion to rescind when the deadline to make a motion to reconsider has passed. Rescind picks up where reconsider leaves off. Any member of the public body may make a motion to rescind, regardless of how the member voted on the original motion. If the motion to rescind is made at a different meeting than the meeting at which the original vote was taken, prior notice must be given of the intent to make the motion. If prior notice is given the motion to rescind requires a majority vote to pass. If prior notice is not given, the motion to rescind requires a two-thirds vote. There is no time limit on making a motion to rescind. In theory, the motion can be made indefinitely. In practice, though, a motion to rescind cannot be used to cancel or countermand an action that has already been accomplished. For example, if the motion that was adopted on Friday was "I move we have a party on Saturday" and the party took place, the motion to hold the party cannot be rescinded. *Robert's*, Chapter IX, §35 Rescind; Amend Something Previously Adopted.

(c) Renew. If a motion is made and disposed of without being adopted, such as a tie vote, *Robert's* provides that the proper procedure to bring the original motion back for further consideration is a motion to renew. Any member of the public body may make a motion to renew and it requires a majority vote to pass. There are no time limits on making a motion to renew. It can be made at subsequent meetings unless a local public body has adopted a special rule that prevents renewal or as a result of the passage of time the motion to renew has become absurd. *Robert's*, Chapter X, §38 Renewal Of Motions.

Even though *Robert's* prefers that a motion to renew be used to revisit a motion that failed on a tie vote, sometimes members of a public body use a motion to reconsider to bring the action back for further action. The Attorney General has indicated that a motion to reconsider can be used to revisit a motion that failed on a tie vote. *See*, 1973-74 Opinion of the Attorney General at 41. A motion to reconsider must be made by someone who voted on the prevailing side and in the case of a tie vote, those who voted against the motion voted on the prevailing side because the motion did not pass.

Note for local government attorneys: When dealing with routine items of business motions to reconsider, rescind, and renew are fairly straightforward. When trying to use these motions to revisit zoning decisions, the use of the motions becomes complicated. Following *Robert's* in a land use context may be inconsistent with Virginia's land use laws. For, example:

If a local public body decides to revisit a rezoning decision by a motion to reconsider, rescind, or renew, does the public body have to readvertise and hold another public hearing? Some localities take the position that revisiting a zoning decision without readvertising and holding another public hearing would violate the requirement of the Virginia State Code that citizens must be given notice of proposed land use matters. Other localities take the position that readvertising and holding another public hearing are not necessary.

If a zoning petition for a rezoning or a conditional use permit is approved, can a public body cancel the vote by a motion to reconsider or rescind? An argument can be made that once property has been rezoned by a local public body an applicant possesses an affirmative or vested property right which cannot be taken away by a subsequent action of the public body. Arguments can also be made that rescinding a vote once a rezoning application has been approved is a downzoning of the property or a taking because the local public body is depriving a landowner of that which has been granted.

> In *Centex Homes, G.P., et al. v. Board of Supervisors of Loudoun County, Va.* Civil Action No. 41482 (Loudoun County Cir. Ct. March 26, 2007) at one meeting the board of supervisors rezoned a parcel of property. At the next meeting a motion to reconsider was made in accordance with the Board's duly adopted rules of procedure and the rezoning was reconsidered and denied. The property owner argued that by reconsidering and denying a rezoning that had previously been approved, the county was in effect downzoning the property without meeting the property criteria for a downzoning. The circuit court did not accept the property owner's downzoning argument, and found that the Board's action was done in accordance with its rules and procedures. While the Virginia Supreme Court granted the property owner's request for issue a writ of certiorari, the property owner abandoned the case after the economy tanked. So, there is no guidance from the Supreme Court on this issue.

As authorized by Section 15.2-2286 of the Virginia Code, many localities have provisions in their zoning ordinances providing that once a zoning petition has been denied "substantially the same petition will not be considered within a specified time (usually one year)." In the case of *Williamson Road Area Business Assoc. and Farrell Properties, L.C. v. City of Roanoke, Virginia and City Council of the City of Roanoke,* Chancery No. 02-471 (Roanoke Cir. Ct. 2002) a motion to rezone property did not garner enough votes to pass

(although no one voted against the motion and one member abstained from voting). One of the members of City Council was absent from the meeting at which the vote was taken. Later in the day, the absent member returned, a motion to reconsider was made, and the rezoning was approved. The rezoning was challenged on the grounds it violated a provision in the city's zoning ordinance prohibiting reconsideration of substantially the same rezoning application for one year. The circuit court agreed, even though City Council had adopted special rules of procedure permitting motions to reconsider. *See also*, 1971-72 Opinion of the Attorney General at 292 advising that once a petition to rezone was considered and not adopted it could not be reconsidered for a period of one year. In order to try and avoid the problems presented by the *Farrell* case, Lynchburg included language in its zoning ordinance that provides "when the council has rejected a petition to amend, supplement or change these regulations, or the boundaries of any district or classification of any property, it may not be required to consider another petition requesting the same change until at least one (1) year has elapsed, except by the favorable vote of five (5) members of city council."

Unfortunately, I do not have definitive answers to these questions. There is very little statutory or case law to guide public bodies in considering these issues. A colleague once remarked that the use of *Robert's* to try and revisit zoning decisions is "a murky swamp into which one ventures at one's own risk." In an effort to stay out of the swamp, some localities adopt special rules of procedure providing that a motion to reconsider or rescind may not be used in a land use decision involving a rezoning or a special use permit. For example, the Lynchburg City Council adopted a special rule of procedure providing that "a motion to reconsider or rescind will not be used in land use matters."

## PREVENTING REPETITIVE DISCUSSIONS

There are steps that can be taken to prevent a member of a public body from bringing up the same topic time and time again. A member who loses a vote on an issue does not have to be allowed to waste the time of the other members with repeated efforts to reconsider the same issue.

(a) Readdressing the same issue. A basic principle of parliamentary procedure is that a body cannot be asked to discuss the same or substantially the same, question twice during a meeting---except through a motion to reconsider a vote. If a member tries to bring up a matter that has already been dealt with the presiding officer should point out that item has been dealt with and it is time to move on to the issue at hand. *Robert's*, Chapter X, §38 Renewal of Motions.

(b) Motion to object to consideration of a question. This is a motion that can be made to prevent a member from bringing up a topic time and time again. The motion:

takes precedence over the original motion
the motion must be made before there has been any debate on the motion
no second in needed
is not debatable
is not amendable
requires a 2/3 vote to pass
can be reconsidered

*Robert's*, Chapter VIII, §26 Objection to the Consideration of a Question.

## ADJOURN OR RECESS

Once the public body has concluded its business, the meeting is either "adjourned" or "recessed." An adjourned meeting is when the public body has finished its business and is bringing the session to a close, with the intention of holding another meeting at a later date. A recess is a temporary break between sittings of a public body. When a meeting of a public body is adjourned, the next meeting of the public body is usually preceded by opening ceremonies. When a meeting of is recessed, there are no opening proceedings and when the public body meets again, business is resumed where it left off, as if there had been no recess.

If tempers flair or the meeting is starting to disintegrate into chaos the presiding officer may want to suggest that the members take a brief recess to let things settle down. The motion to recess is not in order when someone has the floor, requires a second, is not debatable, is amendable as to the length of the recess, and requires a majority vote. *Robert's*, Chapter VII, §20 Recess.

**Presiding Officer**: I think a ten-minute recess would be in order and I will entertain a motion to that effect.

Why does it make a difference whether or not a meeting is adjourned or recessed? Because under *Robert's* a motion to reconsider must be made before the end of the meeting at which the original vote was taken. If a meeting is recessed, when the public body gets back together it is still conducting the same meeting and a motion to reconsider is in order. If a meeting is adjourned, when the public body meets again the meeting is a new meeting and a motion to reconsider can no longer be made.

## RAISING A POINT OF ORDER

When a member of a public body believes another member is not following the rules of procedure, the member can raise a "point of order." A point of order:

seeks to correct a breach of the rules
is not debatable
the presiding officer rules (with assistance from the parliamentarian)
the presiding officer's ruling stands unless appealed
it cannot be reconsidered

*Robert's*, Chapter VIII, §24 Incidental Motions.

By a motion and a second, any two members of the public body can appeal the presiding officer's decision. An appeal:

lets the members of the public body decide if the presiding officer is correct
must be timely
is debatable
is not amendable
a majority or tie vote sustains the presiding officer's decision
a vote on an appeal can be reconsidered

*Robert's*, Chapter VIII, §23 Incidental Motions.

## LESS FORMAL RULES OF PROCEDURE

Members of a local public body are not controlled by, but have a choice over, the rules of procedure they will follow. If a public body wishes to follow a more relaxed set of rules of procedure it can do so. *Robert's* recognizes that some of the formality necessary in a large assembly may not be needed for smaller bodies. A smaller body is one in which there are no more than a dozen members present. The usual parliamentary rules apply, but with several exceptions, the most notable being:

members may speak or make motions without being recognized by the presiding officer
motions do not need to be seconded
there is no limit on the number of times a person can speak on an issue
informal discussion is permitted even if there is no motion pending
the presiding officer can speak, make motions and vote without relinquishing the chair

*Robert's*, Chapter XVI, §49 Boards and Committees.

## ALTERNATIVE RULES OF PROCEDURE

As previously mentioned, *Robert's* was not developed with public bodies in mind. Accordingly, there are a number of provisions in *Robert's* that do not apply to a public body (e.g., voting by mail, expelling a member from office, etc.). Therefore, a public body may decide that its interests are better served by choosing to use alternative rules of procedure. There are several alternative rules of procedure a locality can follow instead of *Robert's. Modern Parliamentary Procedure* by Ray Keesey, *The Modern Rules of Order*, Second Edition by Donald Tortorice and *Suggested Rules of Procedure for Small Local Government Boards* by the Institute of Government of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are all alternatives a local public body can use in place of *Robert's.*

A public body may also choose to adopt its own rules of procedure or bylaws. Adopting its own rules or procedure or bylaws allows the public body to address issues that are of particular concern to the body and go beyond the general provisions in *Robert's*. For example, local rules or procedure or bylaws can include a code of ethics detailing how the members of the public body will act in conducting the public business. Spotsylvania County's rules of procedure include a code of ethics that not only applies to the board of supervisors but to all county boards, commissions and committees.

In 2008 the Lynchburg City Council adopted its own rules of procedure that completely replaced *Robert's.* City Council's rules of procedure went from over 714 pages to 18 pages. In addition to rules for the conduct of meetings, Lynchburg's rules of procedure also address such issues as:

if a meeting is postponed due to inclement weather or an emergency, the meeting is automatically rescheduled without the need to readvertise
how to call a special meeting
how seating arrangements are decided
the preparation of the agenda
how a member of council places an item on an upcoming agenda
decorum among the council members
council will only take up issues concerning the "services, policies or affairs of the city"
citizen participation and behavior during council meetings
prohibited behavior during council meetings
a motion to reconsider or rescind will not be used in land use matters
appointments to boards and committees
how to raise a point of order
gives the presiding officer the authority to call a recess if things become heated
if council's rules of procedure do not address an issue, council will consult *Robert's* for guidance
states that the rules of procedure do not create substantive rights for third parties
a failure to comply with the rules of procedure does not invalidate an action of council

The Lynchburg City Council does use *Robert's* as a guide if issues come up that are not covered in Council's rules of procedure. Like Lynchburg, some other localities such as Chesterfield County and Spotsylvania County have also adopted their own rules of procedure that can serve as a guide to other localities that may wish to consider a similar approach.

## FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

It was my experience that the use of rules of procedure by a governing body helps promote the efficient and orderly operation of business. However, sometimes governing bodies are reluctant to adopt rules of procedure out of concerns that such rules will tie the hands of the body or expose the body to liability if the body fails to follow the rules.

Rules of procedure are adopted for the benefit and convenience of the local public body. Their purpose is to help the public body conduct its affairs in a timely and efficient manner. Rules of procedure do not create substantive rights for the participants in proceedings before a public body. *See* 59 Am. Jur. 2nd Parliamentary Law, §4 (1987). The Virginia law that exists on this subject also supports the position that the failure of a public body to follow a rule of procedure does not have any legal effect on the validity of a public body's action.

In *County of Prince William v. Rau,* 239 Va. 616*,* 39 S.E. 2nd 290 (1990), the Virginia Supreme Court overturned a trial court's sanctions against the board of supervisors on the grounds the board had reasonably concluded that the planning commission had forwarded a valid recommendation on a land use matter, despite apparent violations of *Robert's* by the commission. The court stated:

> [a]mple authority exists for the principle that "mere failure to conform to parliamentary usage will not invalidate [an] action when the requisite number of members has agreed to the particular measure." 4 E. McQuillen, The Law of Municipal Corporations Section 1342a (3d ed. 1985 & Sup at 1989); s*ee also* 1 J. Sutherland, Statutes and Statutory Construction, §7.04 (5th ed. 1994).

239 Va. at 620. *See also, SMFI v. Board of Supervisors,* 9 Va. Cir. 418.

There are also cases from other states holding that rules of procedure are adopted by legislative bodies to transact their affairs in an orderly fashion, and that such rules are procedural and their strict observance is not mandatory. *See,* City of *Pasadena v. Paine*, 126 Cal. App. 2d 93, 271 P.2d 577 (1954), *Commonwealth ex rel. Fox v. Chace*, 403 Pa. 117, 168 A.2d 569 (1961), *Smith v. Dubuque*, 376 N.W.2d 602 (Iowa 1985), *State ex rel. Todd v. Essling*, 268 Minn. 151, 128 N.W.2d 307 (1964), *South Georgia Power Co. v. Baumann*, 169 Ga. 649, 151 S.E. 513 (1929), and *State ex rel. Fox v. Alt*, 26 Mo. App. 673 (1877).

Also, if a locality doesn't want to follow its rules of procedure, *Robert's* allows a public body to suspend its rules of procedure. Standing rules of procedure, those that regulate the administration of a meeting (i.e., a rule that prohibits a speaker from campaigning for office, etc.), can be suspended on a majority vote. Special rules, those that deal with parliamentary procedure (i.e., rules that limit debate or establish the order of business, etc.), can be suspended by a two-thirds vote. *Robert's*, Chapter VIII, §25 Suspend The Rules.

In order to try to avoid the problems associated with a locality not following its rules of procedure, it is a good idea for a public body to adopt a rule of procedure that provides as follows, "These rules of procedure were designed and adopted for the benefit and convenience

of the public body. Their purpose is to help the public body conduct its affairs in a timely and efficient manner. They incorporate the general principles of parliamentary procedure found in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* and applicable Virginia laws. The rules of procedure do not create substantive rights for third parties or participants in proceedings before the public body. Further, the public body reserves the right to suspend or amend the rules of procedure whenever a majority of the public decides to do so. The failure of the public body to strictly comply with *Robert's* shall not invalidate any action of the public body."

## A SOURCE OF HELP FOR PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

If you have questions about *Robert's* you can go to the *"Official Robert's Rules of Order Web Site"* at www.robertsrules.com. The website is maintained by the descendants of General Henry M. Robert, the original author of *Robert's Rules of Order*. The web site offers a brief history of *Robert's*, posts frequently asked questions, provides official interpretations of *Robert's* and allows participation in a question-and-answer forum.