Community Partner Advisory Groups
And Open Meetings Law

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**To what extent is a Community Partner Advisory Group (CPAG) subject to the Open Meetings law?** The short answer is that, in most cases, CPAG’s must comply with the open meetings law. The open meetings law covers committees created by rule or order. Locally created bodies such as citizen advisory committees and ad hoc committees are subject to the law. CPAG’s created by the county board of supervisors or the Extension Education Committee would fall into this category.

So what does this mean for the members of the CPAG? First and foremost, they should familiarize themselves with the open meetings law (Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 19.81-19.98). Members must make sure that:

- They know that citizen members of the committee (the non-elected members) are also subject to the law;
- CPAG meetings are open and accessible to the public;
- They have followed the prescribed ways for providing legal public notice of their meetings;
- They understand the number and purpose tests, i.e., if sufficient numbers of the group are present and talking about the group’s business then a meeting has occurred;
- Only the subject matter included on the public notice is discussed or acted upon during their meeting;
- They hold closed sessions only when they have a statutorily defined reason for doing so; and,
- No secret votes are taken (except for the election of the group’s officers).

There is much more to the law than the above bullet points. Jim Schneider, Local Government Specialist at UW-Extension’s Local Government Center, has prepared an excellent fact sheet on the open meeting law. You can access the fact sheet at [http://www.uwex.edu/lgc/program/pfd/fact1-03.pdf](http://www.uwex.edu/lgc/program/pfd/fact1-03.pdf)  Dan Hill is also available to answer additional questions that you might have. He can be reached at 608-265-2852.

One final note: Dan always instructs local officials to confer with their local corporation counsel for legal advice on this issue. You are encouraged to do the same. If their advice differs from Dan’s, then your CPAG should abide by your corporation counsel’s advice.

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