

Covina-Valley Unified School District—The General Conduct of Board Meetings

In general, meetings of the Governing Board are conducted under the Ralph M. Brown Act (Gov. Code sections 54950, et seq.) and the Board's own bylaws (Series 9000) publically-available on the internet (Brown Act) and the District's website (bylaws).

The Board is permitted to hold regular, special, and emergency meetings. Under the Brown Act, a majority of the Board is not permitted to discuss or transact business outside of a meeting. Regular meetings are held on the first and third Mondays of each month, beginning at 6:00 p.m. for closed session, and 7:00 p.m. for open session, excluding holidays, and on special dates required for the election and the Annual Organizational Meeting. Special meetings may be called at any time when deemed necessary by the Board or by request of the Board. Emergency meetings may be held under certain circumstances identified under the Brown Act. Depending on the type of meeting, the Board will have to provide 72 hours (regular), 24 hours (special), or 1 hour (emergency) notice of the date, time, and place of the meeting.

In addition to the notice of the meeting, the Board is required to post an agenda outlining all of the business to be conducted at the meeting. If an item of business is not identified on the agenda, the Board is not permitted to take action to approve the item.

In order to hold a meeting, a quorum of the Board must be present. Because the Board consists of five members, this means three members must be present to open the meeting. After the Board establishes that a quorum is present, opens the meeting, and approves the meeting agenda, the Board takes public comments regarding closed session items. Under the Brown Act and the Board's bylaws, at this time members of the public are permitted to only address the Board on items identified on the closed session agenda.

Following public comments regarding closed session agenda items, the Board will adjourn to closed session in order to discuss items of business that are permitted to be conducted behind closed doors. The Brown Act provides for a number of different topics that may be discussed in closed session. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Student discipline: under federal and California law, students enjoy great privacy protections when it comes to their information and performance, including disciplinary matters. As a result of these privacy protections, the Board is permitted to hear and take action on student disciplinary matters in closed session
- Property negotiations: the Brown Act specifically authorizes the Board to conduct closed session discussions during which it may provide direction to its designated negotiators in the sale and acquisition of property

- Employee discipline: similar to student privacy, employees enjoy privacy rights concerning certain aspects of their employment, chiefly with respect to disciplinary matters. The Brown Act allows the Board to discuss and take action on employee discipline in closed session, including, but not limited to, the suspension or dismissal of employees for cause

For any closed session item, if the Board takes final action, it must reconvene in open session to report the action taken as well as the vote. This is done following the open session call to order and the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Board does not need to take action on every item of closed session business but sometimes will only discuss matters in closed session. Usually, this occurs because the Board will need to communicate on an item but is prohibited from meeting and discussing outside of a noticed, agendaized Board meeting.

The Board then takes public comments. Under the Brown Act and the Board's bylaws, members of the public are permitted to address the Board on any item identified on the agenda or any item within the Board's jurisdiction. Following public comment, the Board either hears or takes action on any number of items in open session. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Superintendent/Board Member comments: the Superintendent and individual Board members may provide updates and any other items of information they feel important to raise
- Information: each member of the executive cabinet provides items of information to the Board members, including updates on ongoing projects, employment actions, the state of the budget, and other points of interest
- Consent agenda: routine items (such as approval of payroll, approval of purchase orders, or acceptance of gifts, to name a few) are presented to the Board for a block vote (subject to discussion) in order to improve the efficiency of the meeting
- Action items: items that merit an in-depth discussion or special consideration are presented as action items. These items are discussed in greater detail, and the Board takes a formal vote on each item presented

The Board then has the option to reconvene into closed session for further discussion of closed session agenda items, or the Board may adjourn the meeting.