

## IPIB Monthly Column

May 5, 2021

### **From the Iowa Public Information Board**

By Margaret E. Johnson, Executive Director

#### **Question: Are governmental bodies required to provide video conferencing access for all meetings?**

**Answer:** Having remote video conferencing access to a meeting of a governmental body is not required by Iowa Code chapter 21 if in-person access is available. Since March of 2020, many governmental bodies have used electronic access, such as video or telephone conferencing, for the public to watch or listen to open meetings when in-person attendance was impossible or impractical due to health and safety concerns during the pandemic. This was allowed by the various Governor's Proclamations that allowed electronic meetings instead of in-person meetings.

As in-person meetings start to resume, some governmental bodies are continuing to use electronic access in addition to the in-person attendance option. Although not required to provide this remote access to meetings, many governmental bodies have determined that providing this service to the public is a convenient way to improve public access to their open meetings.

**Did You Know** that the Iowa Public Information Board staff is available to assist you with questions or problems involving open meetings and public records in Iowa? During the month of April 2021, 60 contacts were made with the Iowa Public Information Board office.

TYPE	April 2021
Formal complaints	9
Advisory opinions	1
Declaratory orders	0
Informal complaints	9
Informal requests	34
Miscellaneous	7
TOTAL:	60

**Who can contact the IPIB and how long does it take?** Any person can contact the IPIB for assistance by telephone (515-725-1781), by email, or on the IPIB website. So far in 2021, 230 identifiable people have contacted the IPIB. Of these, 120 were private citizens, 82 were government officials or employees, and 28 were members of the media. In 2021, 70% of the incoming contacts were resolved the first day, 14% were resolved in one to five days, and 16% were resolved in six or more days. Opinions, rulings, FAQs, reports, and training documents are available on the IPIB website – [www.ipib.iowa.gov](http://www.ipib.iowa.gov).

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