



Skagit County Board of Commissioners

Ron Wesen, First District
Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Second District
Lisa Janicki, Third District

April 16, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Re: Open Public Meetings Act during “Stay Home, Stay Healthy”

Dear Governor Inslee,

We are writing to comment on Proclamation 20-28, regarding the Open Public Meetings Act and Public Records Act, which among other things, restricts our meetings to only those matters “necessary and routine.” You have made many difficult decisions over the past several weeks, and we thank you for the fortitude and good judgment you have shown. Washington’s Open Public Meetings Act and Public Records Act have built a strong foundation of trust and transparency at the local level, and we appreciate you have to balance open government and community safety during the COVID-19 crisis.

By providing telephonic meeting access and alternatives for submitting public comment, we are set up to continue the tradition of openness at the local level. **Given these access improvements made over the last several weeks – and in response to Proclamation 20-28 – we ask that you consider allowing local government bodies to meet for matters beyond those “necessary and routine.”**

We are all adapting to this new normal. Local governments can meet safely telephonically, and we have demonstrated we can ensure public access and participation. The work of governing must go on. We have priorities to tackle, such as planning for earthquake retrofits on facilities, discussing the use of surplus County property for affordable housing, and adopting priorities for the upcoming legislative session. We need to be able to take these important matters up now.

This crisis is going to continue for some time, and we must continue the business of local government. Please consider modifying Proclamation 20-28 to allow local governments to conduct general business telephonically. We would be happy to talk with you or your staff further about this matter. Thank you for your leadership during this exceptionally difficult time.

Sincerely,

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Ron Wesen, Chair

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Commissioner Lisa Janicki, Commissioner