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News Release

City Commission study session will be conducted online April 3

City will follow all new KOMA provisions; citizens may log in or call in to listen

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (March 30, 2020) — Pursuant to new open meetings requirements set forth by the Kansas Attorney General's Office, the City Commission of Arkansas City hereby provides public notice to all citizens that it will conduct its upcoming study session entirely digitally, starting at **noon Friday, April 3.**

Among other topics, the commissioners will be briefed on the new Kansas Open Meetings Act (KOMA) provisions established by the attorney general, as well as the general coronavirus (COVID-19) situation in Arkansas City and Cowley County. They also may discuss the agenda for the April 7 meeting.

Study sessions do not have set agendas. Those wishing to observe the discussion may do so by:

- Using a computer, tablet or smartphone — <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/796172773>;
- Downloading the GoToMeeting app at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/796172773>;
- Dialing [\(669\) 224-3412](tel:6692243412), then entering the access code **796-172-773**, followed by the pound sign (#) twice.

For questions, concerns or assistance with accessing this virtual meeting, please call Public Information Officer Andrew Lawson at [\(620\) 441-4415](tel:6204414415) or [\(620\) 660-5963](tel:6206605963) prior to **noon Friday.**

New KOMA guidance due to pandemic

The Kansas Open Meetings Act (KOMA) requires meetings public bodies to be “open to the public.”

Ordinarily, that requirement is met by allowing members of the public to enter the room where the meeting is taking place so they can listen and observe. But public health requirements to slow the spread of COVID-19, including the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and state recommendations not to gather in groups of more than 10 people, makes many in-person gatherings impossible or inadvisable.

For immediate release

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The new regulation for complying with the KOMA during an emergency provides as follows:

- KOMA remains in full force and effect unless explicitly suspended by emergency order of the governor. The governor has not currently suspended any requirement of KOMA.
- If the members of the Governing Body themselves are not physically gathered in one place — for example, if the meeting itself is conducted by telephone or videoconferencing — then members of the public must be able to join in the electronic conferencing in order to listen to or observe the meeting. **There is no requirement to allow public comment in this format.**
- If the members of the Governing Body are physically gathered for a meeting, but cannot allow members of the public to be present because of emergency limitations, then the public body must take steps to allow members of the public to listen to or observe the meeting by telephone, videoconferencing, television broadcast or a similar method.
- When the public is participating in a public meeting by telephone or another medium of interactive communication, members of the Governing Body must take steps to help the public to understand the proceedings, despite not being physically present. For example, each speaker in the meeting should identify himself or herself by name before speaking or voting, so remote listeners or observers can more readily know who is speaking. Likewise, each motion should be clearly stated and each vote tally clearly announced afterward.
- The procedure for an executive session must be clearly explained at the outset of a meeting.
- There must be no cost for the public to participate. (*GoToMeeting is free to all users.*)
- There must be a method for distributing any agenda or other written materials that ordinarily could be picked up in person by members of the public attending the meeting. Those procedures must be explained to the public before the meeting begins.

In addition to the regulation itself, which is now legally binding, the attorney general also has issued a Best Practices document with additional actions that are strongly recommended, including:

- Before shifting to these new meeting procedures that do not allow in-person public attendance, the City of Arkansas City will produce and widely disseminate to the general public through news media, social media, email, and other means a notice explaining why and how the ordinary meeting procedures will change, how the public may receive notice of meetings, and how the public may continue to observe or listen to meetings.
- The City will record the meeting audio or video and attempt to post it to the City's [YouTube page](#) so members of the public who could not participate can review what occurred later.
- The City will post to [its website](#) (arkansascityks.gov and arkcity.org) any materials distributed prior to or during the meeting, such as any meeting agenda, agenda packet or presentation.

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