

The Firehouse Lawyer

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CORRECTION OF ARTICLE RELATING TO IN-PERSON MEETINGS

Our previous article stated that on June 30, 2021, all counties will be moving to “Phase 3.” We wish to correct that statement as follows: On July 1, 2021, all Washington Counties will move to “**Phase 4**”—i.e. a **statewide reopening**—on the Roadmap to Recovery.¹ Many clients have asked whether moving to “Phase 4” somehow means that their governing bodies may hold in-person meetings without any restrictions.

As many of our readers know, traditionally, all meetings of a governing body must be open and public and all citizens must be entitled to attend. And these meetings, traditionally, have been held in one room. That changed with Covid-19 and that change lasts to this day:

Proclamation 20-28-14² has been extended until the state of emergency has been terminated or Proclamation 20-28 has been rescinded, as is set forth under Proclamation 20-28-15³—have we had enough proclamations, anyone?

¹ <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/roadmap-recovery-metrics>

² https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/proclamations/proc_20-28.14.pdf

³ https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/proclamations/proc_20-28.15.pdf

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Consequently, until the state of emergency terminated or Proclamation 20-28 is rescinded, governing bodies of public agencies in Washington State may hold in-person meetings, but only insofar as those meetings comply with the guidelines for “Miscellaneous Venues”⁴ referenced in Proclamation 20-28-14 and provide for remote attendance.

In other words, your agency may hold in-person meetings, right now, but not entirely in the same manner as you were able to in February of 2020, despite the fact that we are going into “Phase 4” effective July 1, 2021.

And of course, Governor Inslee could terminate the state of emergency, very soon, or Proclamation 20-28 may be rescinded, very soon, in which case none of the “Miscellaneous Venue” requirements would apply. As we have said dozens of times, Stay Tuned.

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<https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/COVID19%20Misc%20Venue%20Guidance.pdf>