

***Our selectboard would like to hold a budget meeting this fall to discuss a number of monetary issues. Are there any special warning requirements for such a meeting?***

No. Assuming that your budget meeting will be held by the selectboard, notice requirements for it are found in the Open Meeting Law, which covers, generally, government meetings in Vermont. 1 V.S.A., § 310.

The Open Meeting Law requires that the selectboard clearly designate the time and place of its **regular meetings**. Most local boards vote on the time and date of their regularly scheduled meetings (e.g. the second and fourth Tuesday of each month) and post notice of these regular meetings in the local newspaper. 1 V.S.A., § 312(c)(1). These actions satisfy the warning requirements for regular meetings contained in the Open Meeting Law. The law also includes warning requirements for special board meetings (meetings that are not regularly scheduled) and emergency board meetings. 1 V.S.A., § 312(c)(2) and (3). Under Vermont law, **special board meetings** require posting notices in or near the town clerk's office and at least two other places in town at least 24 hours before the meeting. A special meeting must also be publicly announced, meaning that the notice must also be given to an editor, publisher, or news director of a newspaper or radio station serving the area of the state in which the town is located, and to any editor, publisher or news director who has requested notification of special meetings. **Emergency meetings** may be held without notice. For emergency meetings notice must be provided "as soon as possible." To qualify as an emergency meeting a town must establish that the meeting is "necessary to respond to an unforeseen occurrence or condition requiring immediate attention."

As outlined above, our advice is to follow the requirements for warning a regular or special selectboard meeting that are found in Vermont's Open Meeting Law. 1 V.S.A. §§ 310 et seq.

That said, it would be a good idea to give residents more notice than is required by statute, as the point of a budget meeting is to receive public input on important financial decisions – before town meeting – and to foster a more open atmosphere in town government.

*(Editor's note: Other meetings and hearings, with their own particular warning requirements, are found scattered throughout the Vermont Statutes. As an example, public meetings to consider zoning changes are covered in 24 V.S.A. § 4403 and 4404.)*

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