



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 30

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Resolution 180

CALLING FOR AMENDMENTS TO THE OPEN MEETINGS LAW TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS AND CITYWIDE AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCILS

WHEREAS the School Leadership Teams (SLTs), half of whose members must be parents of the school, are subject to the Open Meetings Law (OML);

WHEREAS the Citywide and Community Education Councils (CCECs), elected members of which are all parents with children in the NYC public school system, are also subject to the Open Meetings Law;

WHEREAS unlike members of other public bodies such as the NYC Council or the state legislature, members CCECs serve without compensation, while members of the SLTs can receive up to a \$300 remuneration if they attend all the meetings (totaling up to 30 hours over the school year) and participate in a mandatory training session;

WHEREAS most parent members of the SLTs and the majority members of the CCECs are primary caregivers to their children, and unlike other public bodies whose members do not have to seek employment outside their roles as public officers, most members of SLTs and CCECs have professional obligations outside of their service on these public bodies;

WHEREAS the four Citywide Councils have members from all five boroughs of the City, requiring some members to travel more than an hour each way to their monthly meetings;

WHEREAS on two of the Citywide Councils, Citywide Council for Special Education and Community Education Council District 75, all elected members have children with disabilities, some of whom require specialized childcare while the members attend the monthly meetings;

WHEREAS the OML currently allows SLTs and CCECs to hold hybrid meetings if SLTs or CCECs pass a resolution adopting the hybrid option;

WHEREAS SLTs and CCECs that have adopted the hybrid option must still have a quorum of members at an in-person meeting location;

WHEREAS SLT or CCEC members can only participate remotely under “extraordinary circumstances,” which may include “disability, illness, caregiving responsibilities, or any other

significant or unexpected factor or event which precludes the member's physical attendance at such meeting";¹

WHEREAS during the COVID-19 State of Emergency Executive Order, the OML requirements for in-person meetings were suspended, allowing SLTs and CCECs to conduct their meetings entirely remotely without an in-person component;

WHEREAS during the time SLTs and CCECs were able to meet entirely remotely, attendance by the members of the public increased significantly for many SLTs and CCECs across the city;

WHEREAS during the same time, attendance and retention of the members on CCECs improved because of the ease of participating in monthly meetings;

WHEREAS many members of the public who attend CCEC meetings have voiced their support for the virtual meeting format which enable them to attend and speak during the public comment sessions without having to travel and/or arrange for child care;

WHEREAS hybrid meetings are extremely difficult to implement for SLTs and CCECs because:

- they meet in NYC Department of Education buildings that are not equipped for hybrid meetings;
- they do not own appropriate equipment for hybrid meetings;
- they do not have staff with IT expertise to set up and manage the virtual environment before and during the hybrid meetings;
- remote participants of CCEC meetings are often not able to speak during the public session because of technical difficulties with adequate audio setup for CCEC members to be able to hear the public speakers;

WHEREAS because of these technical challenges, hybrid SLT and CCEC meetings are often less accessible to remote participants, especially those with vision or hearing impairments;

WHEREAS while hybrid meetings may allow members of the public to observe CCEC meetings, because of technical challenges or decisions by councils, the remote participants often do not have the same privilege to speak during the public session as in-person attendees;

WHEREAS some CCECs have vacancies that leave the CCECs with only the quorum number of members, requiring all members to be in person under the current OML;

WHEREAS on such CCECs, if one member is unable to physically attend, the meeting cannot convene under the current OML;

¹ New York State Open Meetings Law, Sec. 103-a (2) (c),
<https://opengovernment.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2023/05/oml-text-05052023.pdf>

WHEREAS transparency and accountability were enhanced during the entirely remote CCEC and SLT meetings because more people were able to fully participate without poor audio and video quality; and

WHEREAS entirely remote CCEC and SLT meetings remove a barrier for parents to serve on these public bodies; therefore, be it

RESOLVED that CEC 30 calls on the State Legislature to amend the Open Meetings Law to allow School Leadership Teams and Citywide and Community Education Councils to meet remotely without an in-person component, be it further

RESOLVED that the State Legislature establish guardrails such that the work of each CCEC and SLT remains truly open and accessible to the public while CCECs and SLTs are given flexibility to determine the mode(s) of meetings that best meets the needs of the community they serve.

VOTED AND APPROVED: March 11, 2024