



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CITY OPEN MEETINGS POLICY DURING COVID-19 CRISIS**

*Great Bend, Ks, March 30, 2020* – On March 20, 2020, the City of Great Bend, Kansas, adopted Resolution Number 032020-A restricting public access to City buildings. The Kansas Attorney General has issued guidance for keeping meeting open to the public during the “social distancing” emergency restrictions.

That guidance includes:

\*The KOMA remains in full force and effect unless explicitly suspended by emergency order of the governor. The Governor has not currently suspended any requirements of KOMA.

\*If the members of the public 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.

\*If the members of the public 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 the members of the public to listen to or observe the meeting by telephone, videoconferencing, television broadcast or similar method.

\*When the public is participating in a public meeting by telephone or other medium of interactive communication, members of the body must take steps to help the public understand the proceedings despite not being physically present. For example, each speaker in the meeting should identify 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.

\*The procedure for any executive session must be clearly explained at the outset of a meeting.

\*There must be no cost for the public to participate.

\*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. Those procedures must be explained to the public before the meeting begins.

Since public access restrictions have been placed on public buildings, the following procedures will be followed in conducting public meetings.

1. During the time of crisis public access to public meetings of the Governing Body of the City of Great Bend, Kansas, is inadvisable and impossible.
2. The City of Great Bend, Kansas, will comply with the provisions of the Kansas Open Meetings Act.
3. The members of the Governing Body will, if at all possible, be physically present for the meetings, although some may have to attend by telephone or teleconferencing. Additionally, circumstances may require that the members of the Governing Body refrain from physically gathering for meeting in one place. In either of these events the City will:
  - a. 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 participate in the meetings. Specifically, the City will:
    - i. Post notices and meeting agendas on its website [www.greatbendks.net](http://www.greatbendks.net) The press will also be notified of meetings.
    - ii. Utilize the website ZOOM at [zoom.com](https://zoom.com) with Meeting ID # 720-707-2528 to broadcast the meeting to the public. Interested persons wishing to use this website may do so by following the procedure set out in the attachment to this document. (To listen and/or observe via the web the address is <https://zoom.us/j/7207072528>)
    - iii. Broadcast the meeting live on Facebook at the following web address <https://www.facebook.com/gbcitycouncil/> .
    - iv. It should be noted that the ZOOM option is accessible through telephonic or internet facilities. Persons wishing to listen and/or observe on Zoom should place their phone on mute by either pressing the Mute button or \*6. Interested persons are not required to have a Facebook page in order to observe the meeting through Facebook.
  - b. Recordings of meetings will be posted on the City's Public Access Television Station, Cox Channel 20 and available for public viewing within 24 hours of the meeting.

- c. Take any actions as may be necessary and reasonable under the circumstances of the emergency declaration to advance the state policy that "meetings for the conduct of governmental affairs and the transaction of governmental business open to the public".

It is the hope of the City that this crisis passes quickly and that all remain safe and healthy. When deemed safe to do so, the City will return to allowing public attendance at meetings. This policy is intended to apply to situations dealing with the various restrictions placed on attendance at public gatherings during this time of crisis.

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