

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/HB 543 Pub. Rec. & Meetings/Public-Private Partnerships/State Universities

SPONSOR(S): Government Operations Subcommittee; Steube

TIED BILLS: CS/HB 541 **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 1396

| REFERENCE | ACTION | ANALYST | STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF |
|--|---------------------|------------|--|
| 1) Higher Education & Workforce Subcommittee | 10 Y, 0 N | Thomas | Sherry |
| 2) Government Operations Subcommittee | 11 Y, 0 N, As CS | Harrington | Williamson |
| 3) Education Committee | | | |

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

House Bill 541 creates a public-private partnership (P3) process for state universities. It authorizes state university boards of trustees (board) to enter into P3s for specified qualifying projects if the board determines the project is in the public's best interest.

This bill, which is tied to the passage of House Bill 541, creates an exemption from public record and public meeting requirements for unsolicited proposals for P3 projects for the upgrade of state university facilities and infrastructure.

The bill provides that an unsolicited proposal is exempt from public record requirements until such time that the board provides notice of its intended decision. If the board rejects all proposals and concurrently provides notice of its intent to seek additional proposals, the unsolicited proposal remains exempt for a specified period of time; however, it does not remain exempt for more than 90 days after the board rejects all proposals received for the project described in the unsolicited proposal.

If the board does not issue a competitive solicitation, the unsolicited proposal is not exempt for more than 180 days.

The bill creates a public meeting exemption for any portion of a meeting during which the exempt unsolicited proposal is discussed. A recording must be made of the closed portion of the meeting. The recording, and any records generated during the closed meeting, are exempt from public record requirements until such time as the underlying public record exemption expires.

The public record exemptions and public meeting exemption are subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and will stand repealed on October 2, 2019, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature. The bill also provides a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.

The bill may create a minimal fiscal impact on state universities.

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a newly created public record or public meeting exemption. The bill creates public record and public meeting exemptions; thus, it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

Public Records Law

Article I, s. 24(a) of the State Constitution sets forth the state's public policy regarding access to government records. The section guarantees every person a right to inspect or copy any public record of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.

Public policy regarding access to government records is addressed further in the Florida Statutes. Section 119.07(1), F.S., guarantees every person a right to inspect and copy any state, county, or municipal record.

Public Meetings Law

Article I, s. 24(b) of the State Constitution sets forth the state's public policy regarding access to government meetings. The section requires that all meetings of any collegial public body of the executive branch of state government or of any collegial public body of a county, municipality, school district, or special district, at which official acts are to be taken or at which public business of such body is to be transacted or discussed, be open and noticed to the public.

Public policy regarding access to government meetings also is addressed in the Florida Statutes. Section 286.011, F.S., known as the "Government in the Sunshine Law" or "Sunshine Law," further requires that all meetings of any board or commission of any state agency or authority or of any agency or authority of any county, municipal corporation, or political subdivision, at which official acts are to be taken be open to the public at all times.¹ The board or commission must provide reasonable notice of all public meetings.² Public meetings may not be held at any location that discriminates on the basis of sex, age, race, creed, color, origin or economic status or which operates in a manner that unreasonably restricts the public's access to the facility.³ Minutes of a public meeting must be promptly recorded and open to public inspection.⁴

Public Record and Public Meeting Exemptions

The Legislature, however, may provide by general law for the exemption of records and meetings from the requirements of Article I, s. 24(a) and (b) of the State Constitution. The general law must state with specificity the public necessity justifying the exemption (public necessity statement) and must be no broader than necessary to accomplish its purpose.⁵

Furthermore, the Open Government Sunset Review Act⁶ provides that a public record or public meeting exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose. In addition, it may be no broader than is necessary to meet one of the following purposes:

- Allows the state or its political subdivisions to effectively and efficiently administer a governmental program, which administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;
- Protects sensitive personal information that, if released, would be defamatory or would jeopardize an individual's safety; however, only the identity of an individual may be exempted under this provision; or
- Protects trade or business secrets.

¹ Section 286.011(1), F.S.

² *Ibid.*

³ Section 286.011(6), F.S.

⁴ Section 286.011(2), F.S.

⁵ Art. I, s. 24(c), Fla. Const.

⁶ Section 119.15, F.S.

The Open Government Sunset Review Act requires the automatic repeal of a newly created exemption on October 2nd of the fifth year after creation or substantial amendment, unless the Legislature reenacts the exemption.

House Bill 541 (2014)

House Bill 541 creates a public-private partnership process for state universities. House Bill 541 authorizes state university boards of trustees (board) to enter into public-private partnerships (P3s) for specified qualifying projects⁷ if the board determines the project is in the public's best interest.

The board may receive unsolicited proposals or may solicit proposals for qualifying projects and may, thereafter, enter into an agreement with a private entity for the building, upgrading, operation, ownership, or financing of facilities.

If the board receives an unsolicited proposal and intends to enter into a P3 agreement for the project, the board must publish a notice in a newspaper of general circulation at least once a week for two weeks stating that the board has received a proposal and will accept other proposals. The board must establish a timeframe in which to accept other proposals.

After the notification period has expired, the board must rank the proposals received in order of preference. If negotiations with the first ranked firm are unsuccessful, the board may begin negotiations with the second ranked firm. The board may reject all proposals at any point in the process.

Public Record and Public Meeting Exemptions

Current law does not provide a public record exemption for unsolicited proposals. However, sealed bids, proposals, or replies received by an agency pursuant to a competitive solicitation are exempt⁸ from public record requirements until such time as the agency provides notice of an intended decision or until 30 days after opening the bids, proposals, or final replies, whichever is earlier.⁹ If an agency rejects all bids, proposals, or replies submitted in response to a competitive solicitation and the agency concurrently provides notice of its intent to reissue the competitive solicitation, the rejected bids, proposals, or replies remain exempt until the agency provides notice of its intended decision or withdraws the reissued competitive solicitation. A bid, proposal, or reply is not exempt for longer than 12 months after the initial agency notice rejecting all bids, proposals, or replies.¹⁰

Current law does not provide a public meeting exemption for meetings during which an unsolicited proposal is discussed. However, public meetings in which a negotiation with a vendor is conducted pursuant to a competitive solicitation, at which a vendor makes an oral presentation as part of a competitive solicitation, or at which a vendor answers questions as part of a competitive solicitation are exempt from public meeting requirements.¹¹ A complete recording of the closed meeting must be made; no portion of the exempt meeting may be held off the record.¹²

The recording of, and any records presented at, the exempt meeting are exempt from public record requirements until such time as the agency provides notice of an intended decision or until 30 days after opening the bids, proposals, or final replies, whichever occurs earlier.¹³ If the agency rejects all

⁷ House bill 541 defines "qualifying project" as a facility or project that serves a public educational, research, housing, parking, infrastructure, recreational, or cultural purpose that is used or will be used by a state university or an improvement, including equipment, of a facility that will be principally used by a state university in serving the university's core mission.

⁸ There is a difference between records the Legislature designates as exempt from public record requirements and those the Legislature deems confidential and exempt. A record classified as exempt from public disclosure may be disclosed under certain circumstances. *See WFTV, Inc. v. The School Board of Seminole*, 874 So.2d 48, 53 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004), review denied 892 So.2d 1015 (Fla. 2004); *City of Riviera Beach v. Barfield*, 642 So.2d 1135 (Fla. 4th DCA 1994); *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So.2d 687 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991) If the Legislature designates a record as confidential and exempt from public disclosure, such record may not be released, by the custodian of public records, to anyone other than the persons or entities specifically designated in the statutory exemption. *See* Attorney General Opinion 85-62 (August 1, 1985).

⁹ Section 119.071(1)(b), F.S.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Section 286.0113(2)(b), F.S.

¹² Section 286.0113(2)(c), F.S.

¹³ *Id.*

bids, proposals, or replies and concurrently provides notice of its intent to reissue a competitive solicitation, the recording and any records presented at the exempt meeting remain exempt from public record requirements until such time as the agency provides notice of an intended decision concerning the reissued competitive solicitation or until the agency withdraws the reissued competitive solicitation.¹⁴ A recording and any records presented at an exempt meeting are not exempt for longer than 12 months after the initial agency notice rejecting all bids, proposals, and replies.¹⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill, which is tied to the passage of House Bill 541, creates an exemption from public record and public meeting requirements for unsolicited proposals for P3 projects for the upgrade of state university facilities and infrastructure.

The bill provides that an unsolicited proposal is exempt from public record requirements until such time that the board provides notice of its intended decision. If the board rejects all proposals and concurrently provides notice of its intent to seek additional proposals, the unsolicited proposal remains exempt until such time that the board provides notice of an intended decision concerning the reissued competitive solicitation or until the board withdraws the reissued competitive solicitation for the project. An unsolicited proposal is not exempt for more than 90 days after the board rejects all proposals received for the project described in the unsolicited proposal.

If the board does not issue a competitive solicitation, the unsolicited proposal is not exempt for more than 180 days.

The bill creates a public meeting exemption for any portion of a meeting during which the exempt unsolicited proposal is discussed. A recording must be made of the closed portion of the meeting. The recording, and any records generated during the closed meeting, are exempt from public record requirements until such time as the underlying public record exemption expires.

The public record exemptions and public meeting exemption are subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and will stand repealed on October 2, 2019, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature. The bill also provides a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Amends s. 1013.505, F.S., relating to P3 projects for the upgrade of state university facilities and infrastructure; provides a definition; providing an exemption for public records requirements for unsolicited proposals held by a board for a specified period; providing an exemption for public meeting requirements for any portion of a meeting of a board wherein exempt proposals are discussed; requiring a recording to be made of the closed meeting; providing an exemption from public record requirements for the recording of, and any records generated during, a closed meeting for a specified period; providing for future legislative review and repeal of the exemption.

Section 2. Provides a statement of public necessity.

Section 3. Provides a contingent effective date.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The bill may create a minimal fiscal impact on boards that receive unsolicited P3 proposals because staff responsible for complying with the public records request could require training related to the public record exemptions. In addition, boards could incur costs associated with redacting the exempt information prior to releasing a record. The costs, however, would be absorbed, as they are part of the day-to-day responsibilities of the board.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

This bill does not appear to require municipalities or counties to expend funds or to take any action requiring the expenditure of funds, reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate, or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with municipalities or counties.

2. Other:

Vote Requirement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting for final passage of a newly created public record or public meeting exemption. The bill creates new public record and public meeting exemptions; thus, it requires a two-thirds vote for final passage.

Public Necessity Statement

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a public necessity statement for a newly created or expanded public record or public meeting exemption. The bill creates new public record and public meeting exemptions; thus, it includes a public necessity statement.

Breadth of Exemption

Article I, s. 24(c) of the State Constitution requires a newly created public record or public meeting exemption to be no broader than necessary to accomplish the state purpose of the law. The bill creates public record and public meeting exemptions for unsolicited proposals for P3 projects that expire after a certain time. The exemption does not appear to be in conflict with the constitutional requirement that the exemption be no broader than necessary to accomplish its purpose.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

On March 12, 2014, the Government Operations Subcommittee adopted a strike-all amendment and reported the bill favorably with committee substitute. The amendment:

- Provided that an unsolicited proposal remains exempt from public record requirements until the board provides notice of an intended decision for a qualifying project, or no more than 90 days after the board rejects the proposals and issues a notice of intent to reissue the competitive solicitation or withdraws the solicitation. The bill provided that the unsolicited proposal remained exempt for no more than 12 months.
- Provided that if a board did not issue a competitive solicitation, the unsolicited proposal is no longer exempt after 180 days.
- Created a public meeting exemption for any portion of a meeting wherein the exempt unsolicited proposal is discussed.
- Required a recording to be made of the closed portion of the meeting.
- Provided that any recording or records generated during a closed meeting are exempt from public record requirements for a specified period.

The analysis is drafted to the committee substitute as passed by the Government Operations Subcommittee.