

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Fiscal Policy

BILL: CS/SB 826

INTRODUCER: Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee and Senator Evers

SUBJECT: Public Records and Public Meetings/Public-private Project Proposals

DATE: April 17, 2015 **REVISED:** _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Stearns	Yeatman	CA	Favorable
2.	Peacock	McVaney	GO	Fav/CS
3.	Stearns	Hrdlicka	FP	Pre-meeting

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 826, which is linked to the passage of CS/SB 824, creates an exemption from public record and public meeting requirements for unsolicited proposals for public-private partnership projects for public facilities and infrastructure.

The bill provides for repeal of the exemption on October 2, 2020, unless reviewed and reenacted by the Legislature. It also provides a statement of public necessity as required by the State Constitution.

Because the bill creates a new public records exemption, it requires a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in each house of the Legislature for final passage.

II. Present Situation:

Public Records and Open Meetings Requirements

The Florida Constitution provides that the public has the right to access government records and meetings. The public may inspect or copy any public record made or received in connection with the official business of any public body, officer, or employee of the state, or of persons acting on their behalf.¹ The public also has a right to be afforded notice and access to meetings of any

¹ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(a).

collegial public body of the executive branch of state government or of any local government.² The Legislature's meetings must also be open and noticed to the public, unless there is an exemption provided for by the Constitution.³

In addition to the Florida Constitution, the Florida Statutes specify conditions under which public access must be provided to government records and meetings. The Public Records Act⁴ guarantees every person's right to inspect and copy any state or local government public record.⁵ The Sunshine Law⁶ requires all meetings of any board or commission of any state or local agency or authority at which official acts are to be taken to be noticed and open to the public.⁷

The Legislature may create an exemption to public records or open meetings requirements.⁸ An exemption must specifically state the public necessity justifying the exemption and must be tailored to accomplish the stated purpose of the law.⁹

Open Government Sunset Review Act

The Open Government Sunset Review Act (OGSR) prescribes a legislative review process for newly created or substantially amended public records or open meetings exemptions.¹⁰ The OGSR provides that an exemption automatically repeals on October 2nd of the fifth year after creation or substantial amendment; in order to save an exemption from repeal, the Legislature must reenact the exemption.¹¹

The OGSR provides that a public records or open meetings exemption may be created or maintained only if it serves an identifiable public purpose and is no broader than is necessary.¹² An exemption serves an identifiable purpose if it meets one of the following purposes *and* the

² FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(b).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Chapter 119, F.S.

⁵ Section 119.011(12), F.S., defines "public record" to mean "all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency." Section 119.011(2), F.S., defines "agency" to mean "any state, county, district, authority, or municipal officer, department, division, board, bureau, commission, or other separate unit of government created or established by law including, for the purposes of this chapter, the Commission on Ethics, the Public Service Commission, and the Office of Public Counsel, and any other public or private agency, person, partnership, corporation, or business entity acting on behalf of any public agency." The Public Records Act does not apply to legislative or judicial records. *Locke v. Hawkes*, 595 So.2d 32 (Fla. 1992). The Legislature's records are public pursuant to s. 11.0431, F.S.

⁶ Section 286.011, F.S.

⁷ Section 286.011(1)-(2), F.S. The Sunshine Law does not apply to the Legislature; rather, open meetings requirements for the Legislature are set out in the Florida Constitution. FLA. CONST., art. III, s. 4(e).

⁸ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c). There is a difference between records the Legislature designates as exempt from public records requirements and those the Legislature designates *confidential* and exempt. See *Williams v. City of Minneola*, 575 So.2d 687 (Fla. 5th DCA 1991); *WFTV, Inc. v. The School Board of Seminole*, 874 So.2d 48 (Fla. 5th DCA 2004).

⁹ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c).

¹⁰ Section 119.15, F.S. Section 119.15(4)(b), F.S., provides that an exemption is considered to be substantially amended if it is expanded to include more information or to include meetings. The OGSR does not apply to an exemption that is required by federal law or that applies solely to the Legislature or the State Court System pursuant to section 119.15(2), F.S.

¹¹ Section 119.15(3), F.S.

¹² Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

Legislature finds that the purpose of the exemption outweighs open government policy and cannot be accomplished without the exemption:

- It allows the state or its political subdivision to effectively and efficiently administer a program, and administration would be significantly impaired without the exemption;
- Releasing sensitive personal information would be defamatory or would jeopardize an individual's safety. If this public purpose is cited as the basis of an exemption, however, only personal identifying information is exempt; or
- It protects trade or business secrets.¹³

The OGSR also requires specified questions to be considered during the review process.¹⁴ In examining an exemption, the OGSR asks the Legislature to carefully question the purpose and necessity of reenacting the exemption.

If, in reenacting an exemption, the exemption is expanded, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are required.¹⁵ If the exemption is reenacted without substantive changes or if the exemption is narrowed, then a public necessity statement and a two-thirds vote for passage are *not* required. If the Legislature allows an exemption to sunset, the previously exempt records will remain exempt unless provided for by law.¹⁶

Public-Private Partnerships

Section 287.05712, F.S., governs the procurement process for public-private partnerships (P3s) for public purpose projects. It authorizes a responsible public entity¹⁷ to enter into a P3 for specified qualifying projects¹⁸ if the responsible public entity determines the project is in the public's best interest.¹⁹

Responsible public entities may receive unsolicited proposals or solicit proposals for qualifying projects and, thereafter, may enter into an agreement with a private entity for the building, upgrading, operation, ownership, or financing of facilities. Unsolicited proposals from private entities must be accompanied by the following material and information, unless waived by the responsible public entity:²⁰

¹³ Section 119.15(6)(b), F.S.

¹⁴ Section 119.15(6)(a), F.S. The six specified questions are: (1) What specific records or meetings are affected by the exemption? (2) Whom does the exemption uniquely affect, as opposed to the general public? (3) What is the identifiable public purpose or goal of the exemption? (4) Can the information contained in the records or discussed in the meeting be readily obtained by alternative means? If so, how? (5) Is the record or meeting protected by another exemption? (6) Are there multiple exemptions for the same type of record or meeting that it would be appropriate to merge?

¹⁵ FLA. CONST., art. I, s. 24(c).

¹⁶ Section 119.15(7), F.S.

¹⁷ Section 287.05712(1)(j), F.S., defines "responsible public entity" as a county, municipality, school board, or any other political subdivision of the state; a public body corporate and politic; or a regional entity that serves a public purpose and is authorized to develop or operate a qualifying project.

¹⁸ Section 287.05712(1)(i), F.S., defines the term "qualifying project" generally a "qualifying project" is a facility, project, or improvement, including equipment, to a service delivery system that serves a public purpose; or projects the governing board designates, for projects that involve a facility owned or operated by the governing board of a county, district, or municipal hospital or health care system, or projects that involve a facility owned or operated by a municipal electric utility. *See* s. 287.05712(1)(i), F.S.

¹⁹ Section 287.05712(4)(d)1., F.S.

²⁰ Section 287.05712(5), F.S.

- A description of the qualifying project, including the conceptual design of the facilities or a conceptual plan for the provision of services, and a schedule for the initiation and completion of the qualifying project.
- A description of the method by which the private entity proposes to secure any necessary property interests that are required for the qualifying project.
- A description of the private entity's general plans for financing the qualifying project, including the sources of the private entity's funds and identification of any dedicated revenue source or proposed debt or equity investment on behalf of the private entity.
- The name and address of the person who may be contacted for further information concerning the proposal.
- The proposed user fees, lease payments, or other service payments over the term of a comprehensive agreement, and the methodology and circumstances for changes to the user fees, lease payments, and other service payments over time.
- Any additional material or information the responsible public entity reasonably requests.

If the responsible public entity receives an unsolicited proposal and intends to enter into a P3 agreement for the project, the responsible public entity must publish a notice in the Florida Administrative Register and a newspaper of general circulation at least once a week for two weeks stating the entity has received a proposal and will accept other proposals. The responsible public entity must establish a timeframe in which to accept other proposals; however, the timeframe for allowing other proposals must be at least 21 days, but not more than 120 days after the initial date of publication.²¹

After the notification period has expired, the responsible public entity must rank the proposals received in order of preference. If negotiations with the first ranked firm are unsuccessful, the responsible public entity may begin negotiations with the second ranked firm. The responsible public entity may reject all proposals at any point in the process.²²

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 exempt from public record requirements until the earlier of the time the agency provides notice of an intended decision or 30 days after opening the bids, proposals, or final replies.²³ If an agency rejects all bids, proposals, or replies submitted in response to a competitive solicitation and 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.²⁴

²¹ Section 287.05712(4)(b), F.S.

²² Section 287.05712(6)(c), F.S.

²³ Section 119.071(1)(b)1., F.S.

²⁴ Section 119.071(1)(b)3., F.S.

Current law does not provide a public meeting exemption for meetings during which an unsolicited proposal is discussed. However, public meetings related to a competitive solicitation at which a negotiation with a vendor is conducted, a vendor makes an oral presentation, or a vendor answers questions are exempt from public meeting requirements.²⁵ A complete recording of the closed meeting must be made and no portion of the exempt meeting may be held off the record.²⁶

The recording of, and any records presented at, the exempt meeting are exempt from public record requirements until the earlier of the time the agency provides notice of an intended decision or 30 days after opening the bids, proposals, or final replies.²⁷ If the agency rejects all 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.²⁸ 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, or replies.²⁹

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1 amends s. 287.05712(15), F.S., and transfers and renumbers it as s. 255.065(15), F.S., to create an exemption from public record and public meeting requirements for unsolicited proposals for P3 projects for public facilities and infrastructure.

The bill provides that the term “competitive solicitation” has the same meaning as provided in s. 119.071(1), F.S.

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

If the responsible public entity does not issue a competitive solicitation, the unsolicited proposal ceases to be exempt 180 days after it is received by the responsible public entity.

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

²⁵ Section 286.0113(2)(b)1., F.S.

²⁶ Section 286.0113(2)(c)1., F.S.

²⁷ Section 286.0113(2)(c)2., F.S.

²⁸ Section 286.0113(2)(c)3., F.S.

²⁹ Section 286.0113(2)(c)3., F.S.

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 and public meeting exemptions are subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and will stand repealed on October 2, 2020, 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 for both the public record and public meeting exemptions.

Section 2 states the bill becomes effective on the same date that SB 824 or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes a law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

This bill creates new public record and public meeting exemptions. Therefore the following constitutional requirements apply.

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 stated 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.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill may create a minimal fiscal impact on local governments that receive unsolicited proposals because staff responsible for responding to public record requests may require training related to the exemption. Local governments may 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 local government. In addition, local governments may incur minimal fiscal costs associated with recording that portion of a closed meeting during which an unsolicited proposal that is exempt is discussed.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 287.05712 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Governmental Oversight and Accountability on March 31, 2015:

Corrects a technical deficiency by including a reference to a linked bill, SB 824, in sections 1 and 3 of the legislation.

B. Amendments:

None.