

Viewpoints

Intricacies of Open Meeting Laws



An Iowa school district recently faced a significant financial penalty after being found in violation of the state's Open Meetings and Records Law. A district court ruled that the Centerville Community School District's board improperly conducted a closed session to discuss the resignation of an employee.

The board's closed-door meeting took place on February 3, 2023, when board members voted to enter private session in order to evaluate the job performance of the employee. Under Iowa law, employee performance reviews may occur in closed meetings. The court, however, found that the board's discussion primarily focused on the merits of the employee's resignation agreement, and not on the employee's job performance. The closed session minutes supported this by revealing a focus on handling the fallout of the employee's resignation agreement.

The District was criticized for the board's actions, noting that it conducted the meeting behind closed doors on a Friday night, followed by a brief open session where the resignation agreement was unanimously



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approved with no public discussion. The outcome of this case underscores the importance of transparency and adherence to open meetings laws in public governance.

One of the central questions in the lawsuit was whether the board met privately, as the district claimed, for the lawful purpose of evaluating Hodges' work performance – as opposed to discussing the merits of Hodges' resignation agreement and related issues

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