

# Public meetings versus public hearings: What is the difference?

When it comes to local government, there are many terminologies to understand. Here is a question to consider: Do you know the difference between public meetings and public hearings?

If not, you are not alone. The truth is, these two terms have commonalities, but there are also some clear distinctions, depending on how you look at them.

## What is a public meeting?

In the world of municipal administration, a public meeting can refer to any situation where a group of governing bodies comes together to discuss business that relates to them. While meetings can vary in appearance and purpose, they must all follow the state's meeting laws.

With meetings, officials often ask for public input, but the law does not require them to do so.

## What is a public hearing?

All public hearings are types of public meetings, but not all public meetings are hearings. For a gathering to be a hearing, the business of the meeting must involve obtaining public input for the purpose of making legal decisions. Whenever the law calls for due process, you can expect there to be a public hearing.

Unlike public meetings in general, public input for hearings is necessary. While many hearings are part of legislative initiatives that can impact a large number of citizens, other hearings are quasi-judicial. With the latter type of hearing, only a very specific group of affected individuals provides input.

In a nutshell, public hearings and public meetings have a lot in common. They involve the gathering of government officials, and often, they both include the input of citizens. The main difference, however, is that hearings require public input.