

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1645

As Passed House:

March 4, 2023

Title: An act relating to meetings of county legislative authorities.

Brief Description: Concerning meetings of county legislative authorities.

Sponsors: Representatives Barnard, Duerr, Connors, Riccelli, Cheney, Hutchins, McClintock, Chambers, McEntire, Sandlin, Eslick, Low, Street, Maycumber, Fitzgibbon, Macri, Reed, Rude, Lekanoff and Ramel.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 2/15/23, 2/17/23 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/4/23, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows a county legislative authority to hold regular meetings once per calendar month in a city within the county that has a greater population than the county seat, and once per quarter at any other location within the county, provided that no more than one meeting per month is held at an alternative location.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Duerr, Chair; Alvarado, Vice Chair; Goehner, Ranking Minority Member; Jacobsen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berg and Riccelli.

Staff: Kellen Wright (786-7134).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

In most counties in Washington, boards of commissioners act as the legislative and chief administrative authority for the county. These boards have at least three members, with counties that have more than 300,000 people allowed to increase the number of commissioners to five. In the seven counties that have adopted a home rule charter, county councils exercise the legislative authority within the county.

However denominated, the legislative authority of each county is required to hold regular meetings at the county seat to transact county business. The county seat is the primary location of county government, with various offices and functions required to be located in the county seat, and where regular meetings of the legislative authority are held. A regular meeting is a reoccurring meeting that is held in accordance with a schedule set out in an ordinance, resolution, bylaw, or rule. The legislative authority may hold a joint regular meeting with another county legislative authority at either of the county seats when the agenda is of mutual interest to the counties.

County legislative authorities are also allowed to hold a regular meeting outside of the county seat at another location in the county when the legislative authority determines that doing so will support greater citizen engagement with county government. This can occur no more than four times a year, and notice of the meeting must be provided at least 30 days prior to the meeting on the county's website, in a newspaper of general circulation, and by email to any county resident who has asked to receive notice.

Summary of Bill:

If a county legislative authority determines that holding a meeting at an alternative location will support greater citizen engagement with county government, then the legislative authority may hold up to one regular meeting per calendar month in a city within the county that has a greater population than the county seat, and up to one regular meeting per quarter at another location within the county. No more than one meeting per calendar month may be held at an alternative location in this way.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Benton County Seat was determined over a hundred years ago, and it is not the major population center within the county. Other cities in the county have grown

significantly larger than the County Seat. Allowing a monthly meeting to be held in a larger city would allow for greater involvement and engagement from a larger segment of the community. This bill would allow the county legislative authority and the community to know that there will be a predictable regular meeting outside of the county seat.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Stephanie Barnard, prime sponsor; and Josh Weiss, Benton County.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.