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April 17, 2020

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***Re: Temporary Suspension of Certain Texas
Open Meetings Laws.***

Dear All:

Effective March 16, 2020, Governor Abbott's office temporarily suspended a limited number of open meeting laws in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) disaster. This action will allow governmental bodies to conduct meetings by telephone or video conference to advance the public health goal of limiting face-to-face meetings (also called "social distancing") to slow the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). This suspension is in effect until terminated by the Governor's office or until the disaster declaration is lifted or expires.

The Governor has suspended the requirement that the public has a right to speak face-to-face with members of the Board on agenda items; provided, however, that governmental bodies must offer alternative methods of communication with their public officials.

Importantly, however, this action does not suspend requirements that governmental bodies conduct meetings in a transparent accessible manner. Specifically,

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governmental bodies, such as OCHD, are still required to conduct meetings in a transparent and accessible manner. To facilitate access in lieu of an in-person meeting, OCHD must:

1. provide online written notice containing a public toll-free dial-in number or a free-of-charge videoconference link, as well as an electronic copy of any agenda packet, before conducting telephonic or video conference meetings;
2. provide the public with access and a means to participate in those meetings, preferably through two-way audio or video connections; and
3. provide the public with access to a recording of those meetings.

Furthermore, the Governor's order does not suspend the 72-hour posting requirement or emergency meeting requirements.

If you have questions, please let me know.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "F. Keith Good". The signature is stylized and cursive.

F. Keith Good
FOR THE FIRM

FKG/teo

cc: Debbie Blodgett via e-mail: dblodgett@oghtx.com
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