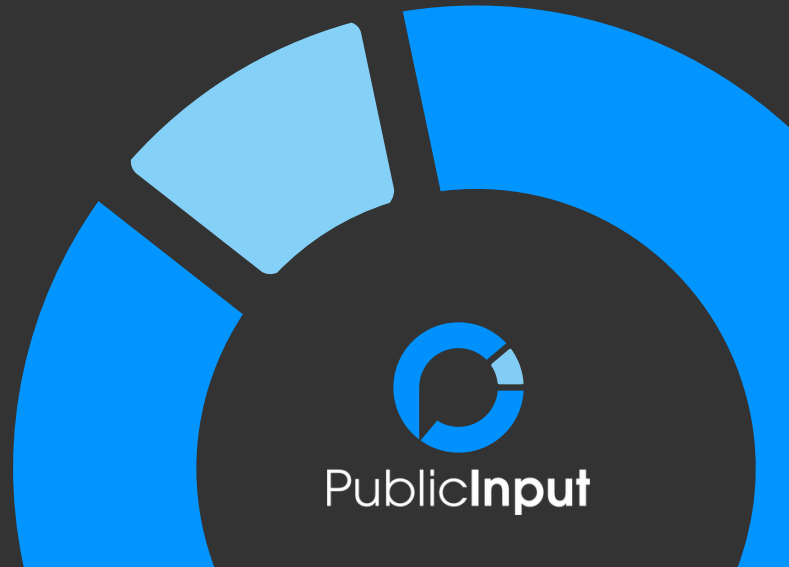


# The Clerk's Buyers Guide to Meetings Software

What to look for — and why it matters



## WHY THIS GUIDE?

Clerks ensure every meeting is legally noticed, every comment captured, every vote recorded, and every record audit-ready. The tools most rely on weren't built for any of that. Agendas in one system. Streaming in another. Comments by email. Minutes assembled from recordings and handwritten notes, often late into the evening.

This guide is a framework for evaluating whether a platform is truly built for the way government meetings work. The right choice is about risk management, legal compliance, and the public's ability to trust that their government runs an open, accessible, and well-documented process.

## 1. THE STAKES ARE DIFFERENT IN GOVERNMENT

Most software decisions are about efficiency. A clerk's decision about meeting software is about something even more consequential: legal compliance.

State open meetings laws — California's Brown Act, Florida's Sunshine Law, Texas's Open Meetings Act — are legal mandates, not guidelines. An improperly noticed meeting or a mishandled comment period can result in an invalidated council decision, and sometimes, the agency paying the challenger's legal fees.

Clerks are already managing multiple boards, dozens of meetings, and a constant stream of records requests while tracking evolving statutes and accessibility requirements. A patchwork of tools — one for agendas, another for streaming, email for comments, Word for minutes — introduces risk at every handoff. In government, what falls through the cracks becomes a compliance problem.

*Consider this: Are you managing compliance risk with purpose-built tools, or working around it with whatever you have?*

## 2. MANAGING THE FULL MEETING LIFECYCLE

A public meeting is a connected workflow that begins days before anyone enters the room and ends only when minutes are approved and published. Most software treats these phases as separate problems.

When they live in different systems, things get lost. Comments miss the record. Votes get misattributed. Minutes take a week because the clerk is reconstructing the meeting from a recording and scattered notes. A single source of truth is the difference between a record you can confidently defend and one that leaves your agency exposed.

*Consider this: Can you trace a single agenda item — from draft to published minutes — in one place?*

## 3. MAKING PUBLIC MEETINGS LESS PAINFUL

Most states allow hybrid participation. Some require it. But the real opportunity is using technology to make meetings run better, not just more accessible.

The traditional comment period limits participation to whoever can show up at 6pm on a Tuesday, slows down the agenda, and produces a comment record that's incomplete and hard to attribute to specific items.



Offering public comment online, by phone, or submitted in advance gives officials context before the meeting begins and frees the meeting itself for deliberation.

This only works if the platform manages all inputs in one place. A unified speaker queue — in-person, virtual, and phone — ensures equitable treatment and a complete comment record, without juggling three systems at once.

*Consider this: What if your agenda moved faster because public comment already happened?*

#### 4. THE POST-MEETING NIGHTMARE IS SOLVABLE

Ask a clerk what part of their job they'd most like to reclaim, and the answer is almost always the same: meeting minutes.

AI-assisted minutes don't replace the clerk's judgment — they eliminate the most mechanical part of the job. When a platform auto-organizes votes, motions, and comments by agenda item and produces a working draft, the clerk shifts from transcription to editing. Audit-ready records become a byproduct of the meeting, not an afterthought.

*Consider this: How many hours did your team spend on minutes after your last meeting?*

“ Since switching to PublicInput's Meetings product, we've cut meeting prep and post-processing time by 26% — eliminating hours of manual agenda updates, spreadsheet tracking, and caller management that used to bog down our entire team.”



– **Andrew Potter, Executive Officer/Clerk,**  
San Diego County Board of Supervisors

#### 5. PARTICIPATION IS A LEGAL RECORD, NOT JUST ENGAGEMENT

Public comment is a legal record. Who spoke, what they said, and which agenda item they addressed may all be scrutinized in a legal challenge.

Your platform needs to capture them completely and automatically.

Multi-channel input — online, phone, SMS, in-person — broadens who gets heard. Every comment, regardless of channel, must be tied to a specific agenda item and captured in the official record without manual sorting.

##### **Davis v. Wayne County Airport Authority**

The Board held a meeting where portions were inaudible to the public. The court found an Open Meetings Act violation and ordered the Board to pay the plaintiff's attorney fees — not because the meeting didn't happen, but because the public couldn't meaningfully participate.

**Key takeaway: You must be able to document that the public could hear and participate, not just assert it.**

##### **Ribakoff v. City of Long Beach**

A member of the public sued after being limited to three minutes while observing others speak longer. The City prevailed only because it could demonstrate the time limit was applied consistently and was content-neutral.

**Key takeaway: You cannot prove equitable treatment without a complete record of who participated and how.**

## 6. HOW TO EVALUATE YOUR OPTIONS

The right platform is one you can trust when the stakes are high and the public is watching.

### Does it reduce legal risk, or introduce it?

Look for platforms built around compliance, not adapted from corporate tools. Ask whether the vendor can speak to your state's specific open meetings laws, not just features in general.

### Does it integrate with what you already use?

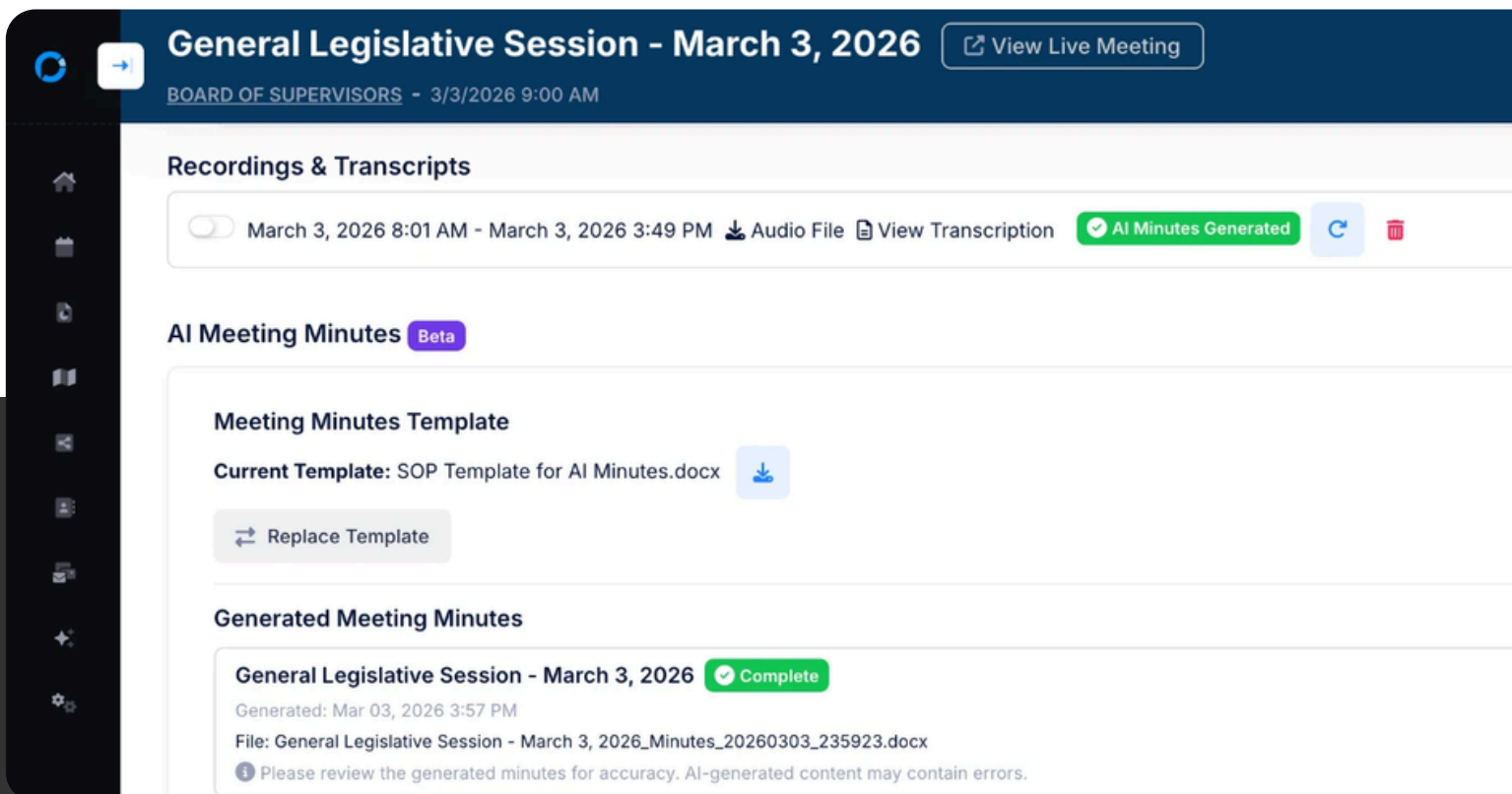
The best platforms meet agencies where they are. Integration with existing agenda software and video conferencing tools signals maturity and preserves what's already working.

### Does the vendor actually understand government?

Clerks have different needs than corporate board secretaries. Look for vendors who understand your state's statutes, your certification landscape, and the difference between a board portal and a public meeting platform.

### Does the vendor you're considering grow with you — or will you be shopping for a new platform the next time your needs change?

Hybrid meetings might not be a priority right now, but choosing a vendor that has options for hybrid meeting support will allow you to easily transition when you're ready to take that step. You can easily start with a platform that helps streamline your Meeting Minutes now and add features over time.



The screenshot displays the PublicInput interface for a meeting titled "General Legislative Session - March 3, 2026" under the "BOARD OF SUPERVISORS" on "3/3/2026 9:00 AM". A "View Live Meeting" button is visible in the top right. The main content area is divided into sections:

- Recordings & Transcripts:** A toggle switch is turned off. A recording entry for "March 3, 2026 8:01 AM - March 3, 2026 3:49 PM" includes options to download an "Audio File" and "View Transcription". A green badge indicates "AI Minutes Generated".
- AI Meeting Minutes (Beta):**
  - Meeting Minutes Template:** The current template is "SOP Template for AI Minutes.docx". A "Replace Template" button is available.
  - Generated Meeting Minutes:** A record for "General Legislative Session - March 3, 2026" is shown as "Complete". It was generated on "Mar 03, 2026 3:57 PM" and the file name is "General Legislative Session - March 3, 2026\_Minutes\_20260303\_235923.docx". A note at the bottom states: "Please review the generated minutes for accuracy. AI-generated content may contain errors."

## ABOUT PUBLICINPUT

PublicInput is the only platform that automates the full meeting lifecycle — from agenda creation to published, audit-ready minutes.

### Step 1 — Build the Agenda

Drag-and-drop builder, templates, versioned packets — posted on time, every time.

### Step 2 — Run the Meeting

Unified speaker queue for in-person, virtual & phone. Live captions. Real-time comments by item.

### Step 3 — Generate the Minutes

AI drafts minutes from votes, motions & comments — hours of transcription become minutes of editing.

### Step 4 — Publish the Record

Export audit-ready PDFs and post approved minutes directly to your website

Start with AI Minutes and agenda management. Add hybrid participation and speaker tools as you need them. One platform, one learning curve, no forced migrations.

[BOOK A DEMO](#)

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