

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023

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SENATE BILL 200

Short Title: Onslow County/Public Notices. (Local)

Sponsors: Senator Lazzara (Primary Sponsor).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

March 7, 2023

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE MUNICIPALITIES IN ONSLOW COUNTY TO PUBLISH
REQUIRED PUBLIC NOTICES ELECTRONICALLY AND TO AUTHORIZE ONSLOW
COUNTY TO PUBLISH LEGAL NOTICES VIA THE COUNTY-MAINTAINED
WEBSITE FOR A FEE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) Part 3 of Article 4 of Chapter 153A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 153A-52.3. Electronic notice for notices required to be published by governing board.

(a) Except as provided in this section, a governing board may adopt an ordinance providing that any notice it is required by law to publish or advertise, whether under G.S. 1-597, under Article 8 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, under any other general law, or under any local act, may be published electronically as provided by this section in lieu of or in addition to the required publication or advertisement. The ordinance may cover all notices required to be published or advertised or a clearly identified category of notices. The ordinance may set reasonable fees to cover the cost of providing electronic notice under this section.

(b) Upon adoption of an ordinance under subsection (a) of this section, the governing board shall publish specific instructions as to how to access all notices published electronically under the ordinance adopted pursuant to this section at least once a month for 12 months in a newspaper having a general circulation for that jurisdiction, as provided in G.S. 1-597.

(c) Any notice published under an ordinance adopted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall comply with all of the following:

- (1) The notice is published on the website of the board of county commissioners no later than the time that publication is required under the applicable statute or local act.
- (2) The website is maintained by the board of county commissioners, with sufficient staff to maintain that website.
- (3) The website contains, on its main page, links to all notices or a link to another page with links to all notices.
- (4) Notices and links to all notices on the website shall be maintained on that website for at least one year after publication and shall be searchable.
- (5) A copy of the notice shall be filed in a notice book maintained separate and apart from the ordinance book or minutes of the governing board. The notice book shall be appropriately indexed and maintained for public inspection in the office of the clerk or in the office of another individual who is an employee



of the governing board, as designated in the ordinance adopted pursuant to this section.

(6) A copy of the notice shall be mailed or emailed to any person who has filed a written request for notice with the clerk or secretary of the governing board or with some other person designated by the governing board. The governing board may require each person submitting such a written request for notice to renew that request annually.

(d) Ordinances adopted pursuant to this section may not supersede any general law or local act that requires notice by mail to certain persons or classes of persons or the posting of signs on certain property.

(e) The ordinance adopted by the governing board may control notice given by any board appointed by the governing board, including the planning board, board of social services, and board of health. The board of elections of a county where the board of county commissioners has adopted an ordinance may also publish notices on the website of the board of county commissioners, as provided in G.S. 163-33.

(f) A city council may adopt an ordinance pursuant to subsection (a) of this section and publish notices in compliance with this section through publication on the website of the board of county commissioners where the city council is located if the county has also adopted an ordinance pursuant to subsection (a) of this section.

(g) For purposes of this section, "governing board" means the body elected or appointed as the board of county commissioners or city council."

SECTION 1.(b) G.S. 160A-1(7) reads as rewritten:

"(7) "Publish," "publication," and other forms of the verb "to publish" mean ~~insertion~~ any of the following:

- a. Insertion in a newspaper qualified under G.S. 1-597 to publish legal advertisements in the county or counties in which the city is located.
- b. Electronic notice, as provided in G.S. 153A-52.3, if an ordinance has been adopted by the governing board."

SECTION 1.(c) G.S. 153A-1(6) reads as rewritten:

"(6) "Publish," "publication," and other forms of the verb "to publish" mean ~~insertion~~ any of the following:

- a. Insertion in a newspaper qualified under G.S. 1-597 to publish legal advertisements in the county.
- b. Electronic notice, as provided in G.S. 153A-52.3, if an ordinance has been adopted by the governing board."

SECTION 1.(d) G.S. 159-1(b)(5) reads as rewritten:

"(5) "Publish," "publication," and other forms of the word "publish" mean ~~insertion~~ any of the following:

- a. Insertion in a newspaper qualified under G.S. 1-597 to publish legal advertisements.
- b. Electronic notice, as provided in G.S. 153A-52.3, if an ordinance has been adopted by that governing board."

SECTION 1.(e) G.S. 163-33(8) reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-33. Powers and duties of county boards of elections.

The county boards of elections within their respective jurisdictions shall exercise all powers granted to such boards in this Chapter, and they shall perform all the duties imposed upon them by law, which shall include the following:

...

- (8) To provide for the issuance of all notices, advertisements, and publications concerning elections required by law. If the election is on a State bond issue, an amendment to the Constitution, or approval of an act submitted to the

1 voters of the State, the State Board of Elections shall reimburse the county
2 boards of elections for their reasonable additional costs in placing such
3 notices, advertisements, and publications. In addition, the county board of
4 elections shall give notice at least 20 days prior to the date on which the
5 registration books or records are closed that there will be a primary, general
6 or special election, the date on which it will be held, and the hours the voting
7 places will be open for voting in that election. The notice also shall describe
8 the nature and type of election, and the issues, if any, to be submitted to the
9 voters at that election. Notice shall be given either by (i) advertisement at least
10 once weekly during the 20-day period in a newspaper having general
11 circulation in the county and by posting a copy of the notice at the courthouse
12 ~~door~~ or (ii) electronic publication on the website of the board of county
13 commissioners if the board of county commissioners of that county has
14 adopted an ordinance pursuant to G.S. 153A-52.3. Notice may additionally be
15 made on a radio or television station or both, but such notice shall be in
16 addition to the newspaper and other required notice. This subdivision shall not
17 apply in the case of bond elections called under the provisions of Chapter
18 159. Chapter 159 of the General Statutes."

19 **SECTION 1.(f)** This section applies only to Onslow County and any municipality
20 located wholly or in part in Onslow County.

21 **SECTION 1.(g)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to notices
22 published on or after that date.

23 **SECTION 2.(a)** Article 50 of Chapter 1 of the General Statutes is amended by adding
24 a new section to read:

25 **§ 1-602.1. Publication via county-maintained website.**

26 (a) In lieu of publishing in a newspaper in accordance with this Article, publication of
27 any notice permitted or required by law to be published in a newspaper may be accomplished by
28 contracting with a county who has adopted an ordinance authorizing the county to publish such
29 notice on the county-maintained website pursuant to this section. The board of commissioners
30 may adopt an ordinance establishing the county website as a central location for publishing or
31 advertising legal notices in accordance with this section, if the county complies with all of the
32 following:

- 33 (1) The county maintains its own website, with sufficient staff to maintain that
34 website.
- 35 (2) The county has sufficient staff to complete affidavits as needed for all legal
36 notices as required by subsection (b) of this section.
- 37 (3) The county collects and remits fees as authorized in subsection (b) of this
38 section.
- 39 (4) The county provides notice that public notices may be published on the
40 county-maintained website, in a newspaper, or both.

41 (b) Whenever a county has published a notice or any other paper, document, or legal
42 advertisement within the meaning of G.S. 1-597 and a county employee makes a written
43 statement under oath taken before any notary public or other officer or person authorized by law
44 to administer oaths stating that the county placed such notice, paper, document, or legal
45 advertisement upon its website, such sworn written statement shall be received in all courts in
46 this State as prima facie evidence that the county placed the notice, paper, document, or legal
47 advertisement upon its website for the stated period of time. When filed in the office of the clerk
48 of the superior court of that county, any such sworn statement shall be deemed to be a record of
49 the court and such record or a copy thereof duly certified by the clerk shall be prima facie
50 evidence that the county placed the notice, paper, document, or legal advertisement upon its

1 website for the stated period of time. The county may charge fees for the administrative costs to
2 the county.

3 (c) Notwithstanding G.S. 1-595, when a statute or written instrument stipulates that an
4 advertisement of a sale shall be made for any certain number of weeks, publication via the
5 county-maintained website in accordance with this section for the number of weeks so indicated
6 is a sufficient compliance with the requirement.

7 (d) Any newspaper that publishes public notices shall provide notice that public notices
8 may be published on the county-maintained website, in the newspaper, or both.

9 (e) Nothing in this section requires a county to adopt an ordinance authorizing the county
10 to publish notices on a county-maintained website."

11 **SECTION 2.(b)** This section applies only to Onslow County and any municipality
12 located wholly or in part in Onslow County.

13 **SECTION 2.(c)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to notices
14 published on or after that date.

15 **SECTION 3.** This act is effective when it becomes law.