New Law Requires .gov Municipal Websites – What You Need to Know

Summary

Recent legislation has amended General Municipal Law §§ 300 and 30(7), MANDATING that all municipal corporations with a population of 1,500 or more establish and maintain an official website with a ".gov" domain name.

Municipal Website Requirements

At a minimum, municipal websites must be accessible to the public, updated regularly, and include the following:

- **Basic Municipal Information:** Hours of operations, elected officials, and services provided.
- **Privacy Policy:** Clearly posted and written in plain language, outlining data collection and usage practices.
- **Financial Documents:** Most recent annual financial reports, current-year budget, independent audit reports, and fiscal performance plans, as required by State Finance Law, unless exempt under FOIL.
- **Public Notices:** Announcements of municipal elections, public hearings, and board or legislative meetings.
- **Agendas & Minutes:** As required under Open Meetings Law.
- **Legal & Regulatory Documents:** Local laws, codes, and resolutions, with hyperlinks to external locations if applicable.

For Municipalities with Populations Under 1,500

Municipalities with populations below 1,500 (based on the most recent federal census) are required to follow the website requirement as much as they reasonably can, given their available resources, staffing, and technology. *If you host your official website on another municipality's .gov domain, it fulfills the requirement.*

How to Acquire . gov Domain

A .gov domain enhances trust, security, and credibility at **no cost** to state and local governments. Municipalities can obtain a .gov domain through the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) at https://get.gov/domains/. To obtain a .gov domain, you should:

1. **Prepare Before Applying.** Choose an appropriate domain (e.g., townname.gov). Obtain authorization from a municipal executive or senior official. Ensure existing website infrastructure supports a smooth transition, if applicable.
2. **Create a Login.gov Account.** Verify your identity using either a state-issued ID, your Social Security number, or a valid phone number.
3. **Submit a .gov Domain Request.** Visit get.gov/domains/ to start your request. Collect the required information including: Type of government organization [e.g., Town, City, County, Special District]; Organization name and mailing address; Your senior official, Current websites (if applicable); .gov domain you want; Purpose of domain; Your contact information; Other employees from your municipality. Receive digital approval.
   a. **Important Note:** *Before using your approved .gov domain, you'll need to link it to your website DNS hosting provider (contact the vendor or person that manages your website).*
4. **Manage Your .gov Domain.** Update DNS settings and manage contacts. Assign additional users for domain security.

Additional Resources

- Need help choosing a domain name? Contact https://get.gov/ for guidance.
- NYMIR: Contact Elisabeth Dubois, Cyber Risk Specialist at 518.949.0127 or edubois@wrightinsurance.com.
- NYS Associations: Email The Conference of Mayors, Association of Towns, or Association of Counties.
- Your municipal counsel: Consult their legal counsel to fully understand the local implications of this legislation.